

3. H. a.

A  
GENERAL VIEW  
OF THE  
S T A G E.

By Mr. W I L K E S. K.

TENTANDA VIA EST.



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the happiness or misery of the greatest per-  
sonages that ever lived, we are worked up to  
contempt, and our ears become passively ad-  
mire of sounds that have no effect upon our  
minds.

**TO THE**  
**RIGHT HONOURABLE**  
**GARRET, LORD MORNINGTON,**  
**THIS GENERAL VIEW**  
**OF THE STAGE**  
**IS INSCRIBED,**  
**WITH**  
**THE GREATEST RESPECT,**  
**BY HIS LORDSHIP'S**  
**MOST HUMBLE AND OBEDIENT SERVANT,**  
**THOMAS WILKES.**

# P R E F A C E.

THE following sheets were at first intended by the author as a private amusement, and one of a few friends; but it is now published, as the only means of making the production known. The language, however, may be as agreeable to some, as to those who have not the pleasure of examining the nature of that picture which is offered to the artist's eye. The author has as a direction to himself to keep as apply their talents to the stage. The character of the principal to draw is a man of private performers, and the style of private, but he hopes universal observation. If he has erred in any particular, he will

# P R E F A C E.

**T**HE following sheets were at first intended by the author for his private amusement, and the entertainment of a few friends; and it is to their kind partiality; rather than his own judgment, that the publication is now owing. He imagines, however, that it may be an agreeable entertainment to those who have not had opportunities of enquiring into the nature of that pleasure which is derived from theatrical entertainments, and serve as a direction or information to such as apply their talents to the Stage.

The characters he has attempted to draw of a few of the principal performers, are the result of private, but he hopes impartial, observation. If he has erred in any particular, he

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will very readily acknowledge, and retract his mistake ; as he is certain, that neither malevolence or any particular attachment have influenced him.

He does not offer this as a finished performance. He is convinced, that first attempts seldom reach perfection ; and that this has too many inaccuracies to assume that character. But as it seems to be a more regular design than has yet appeared on the subject, he hopes that it may be an inducement to abler pens to follow his example, and fill up the outline he has attempted ; and that the critically impartial will excuse his deficiencies for the candour of his intention. In that confidence he submits it to the public perusal.

C O N-

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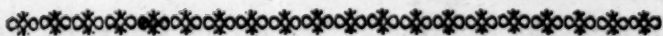
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A  
GENERAL VIEW  
OF THE  
STAGE.



CHAP. I.

*Definition of the Stage ; its use to Society ; the  
disadvantages under which it labours.*

ONE of the most celebrated writers of  
the last age, in his *Essay on Dramatic  
Poefy*, has defined a play to be “a just  
“and lively image of human nature, represent-  
“ing its passions and humours, the changes of  
“fortune to which it is subject, for the de-  
“light and instruction of mankind.” This  
is a just definition, and we are more obliged  
to him for it, when we remember it is what  
Aristotle and Horace, notwithstanding the  
pains they have taken with the Theatre, have  
B forgotten

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forgotten to leave us. Certainly the Theatre, whether viewed in a tragic or comic light, is a lively picture of the human passions: the first represents subjects that are in themselves grand and above the common sphere; the last lashes at the vanity of the general world, the elbowed crowd of mortals: here you laugh at the intrigues and follies of the city dame; the knaveries of trade, or feel the lash given to absurdity and ridicule: there you weep the fall of the intrepid Cato; the gallant Alexander; the untimely fate of an Ophelia, or Desdemona's betrayed innocence. Plays properly conducted, might certainly be academies of virtue, inspire courage, form elegant taste, and infuse humanity.

Perhaps, it were to lay myself open to an accusation of wanting a due respect for things sacred, were I to assert, that its influence upon our morals might be rendered almost as useful to society as that of the pulpit. The Stage inspires more strongly with sentiments of emulation; it teaches by pictures, that have the semblance of reality from action, what the soldier, the patriot, or the gentleman ought to do to make society still more happy: the pulpit



pit delivers plain, moral, and religious truths, that conduce indeed to the private emolument of the peasant ; but these are in general already known to every elevated and distinguished character : it furnishes a dry demonstration of our duty ; but the former governs the mind by attaching the heart, and alarming the passions ; it shews pride in contention with desire, fear opposed to ambition, shame set against folly ; and balances human nature. From a Theatre seasonably and judiciously conducted, the greatest and most noble advantages might descend upon the people : and this seemed to be the sense of cardinal Richlieu, who in France raised and protected it to the last. Instances may be deduced from history, of the prevalence and force of well penned arguments, which tho' but dumb oratory, have heretofore imprinted hatred ; inflamed and directed the passions even against truth and common sense. But these effects fall far short of the glowing consequences of eloquence, of a free delivery, a spirited action, a feeling of the subject ; it is here popular fury is raised ; or the wild tumult soothed ; it is here virtue may be enforced ; and vice with all its arts put to flight.

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But how faint is the power of the writer, the persuasion of the orator, when weighed against the strength of the stage; there we are truly animated: there we impress not on our memories barely, but on our hearts, ideas that intermixing with, become of a similar substance with the passions: those arguments which had but voice from the orator, catch from the actor existence, and glow with life. Warmed by the strength of character, we almost possess it, and are transported beyond ourselves. The calm Brutus furnishes us with fortitude; the faithful Edgar infuses loyalty; the tender Romeo fills with compassion; and Orlando's care of old Adam, inspires with generosity. Thus the noblest sentiments taking root in pleasure, a most grateful soil, enlarge their bounds, and rely on reason as their support. "We are here humanized," says Aaron Hill, "without suffering; we become acquainted with the manners of nations, acquire a fine polish without travelling; and without the trouble of study imbibe the most pleasing, the most useful lessons."

Example is the strongest argument in philosophy; and dramatic poetry assumes almost  
all

all the force of such examples as are furnished by real life. *Longum iter per precepta, breve & efficax per exempla*; "Example, says Seneca, "is a method of instruction shorter and more "efficacious than precept." Crusaz observes upon this maxim, that example, indeed, affords a more effectual, but not a shorter method than precept; and that we should begin in the latter to prevent our being imposed upon by the former. From the opinions of these two philosophers, we may infer, that example and precept blended, constitute the truest method of instruction; and they can only be blended upon the stage.

The most celebrated characters of all ages and nations, the most remarkable events lie open to the creative genius of the dramatic poet, under whose hands they rise to light, with additional lustre of strong fancy, and harmonious numbers to embellish them. Every noble action that can stimulate the heart to virtue, every distressful incident that can touch with pity, or melt the soul into that softness which adds dignity to human nature, receives from him a brighter polish. Under his direction the performer inspires the before

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inactive scene with proper manners, with necessary passions; he gives it by voice and performance the semblance of reality, the force of truth; and thus united, the bard and the player happily hold up the *mirror to nature*, in which each man may behold his own portrait at length; the shades of vice, and lights of virtue being so happily blended, as to force the human heart to acknowledge the likeness, and the audience are obliged from their own feelings to applaud.

We are told, that Alexander, tyrant of Phera, was so affected on seeing the Hecuba of Euripides acted, that he went out before the end of the first act, saying, "he was ashamed to weep at the misfortunes of Hecuba and Polyxena, when he daily embrued his hands in the blood of his own citizens." He was afraid (says Dacier) that his heart would be truly mollified, the spirit of tyranny leave his breast, and he go a private person out of the Theatre, which he entered as a master. The actor, who so sensibly touched him, with difficulty escaped with life, but was preserved by some remains of that pity he had so powerfully raised.

History



History furnishes many incidents that confirm the assertion. If a well regulated Drama is attended with such happy effects, may we not allow it to be the noblest entertainment the mind can enjoy, or ought to encourage? Besides, here the sister arts pour out all their charms, to make instruction delightful. To the force of judicious acting, Poetry adds the softest, the most delightful numbers, Painting her most beautiful assemblage of Colours; and Music her most captivating sounds.

The reformation rising from the Stage may be made almost as efficacious as that of the pulpit, because the solemn dignity of the latter can only correct, or instruct, by declamatory remonstrance; a method that does not always succeed: whereas many people are more open to feel the ridicule flung by the comic muse upon their peculiarity of character, or extravagancies in vice or folly. In the pulpit, the moral lesson only can be delivered; on the Stage, the moral may be so tempered with the pleasing, that even levity cannot help attending.



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That vice is more afraid of ridicule than of the most serious rebuke, is no uncommon observation. The reason is evident; because though we renounce the practice of virtue, the love of it is enforced by reason, and a moral sense of shame remains impressed even upon the mind of the most abandoned. The dramatic poet, in his attacks upon vice, is at liberty to search the province of humour for assistance; to call in wit, pleasantry and poignant satire to his aid; when he has a mind to banish folly, by laughing her out of countenance. Thus, with force of genius, strength of fancy, choice of expression, grouping of ideas, and harmony of numbers, he smooths the rough precepts of philosophy, awakens the heart to a true feeling of its duty; and whether he deals in the jocular or the serious, whether he calls forth the laugh, or compels the tear, he enforces the principles of humanity, and his power is equally acknowledged. From him the characters of history receive an accession of strength and beauty; and the actor calls them, as it were, into life again, for our instruction and reformation. The poet presents a correct drawing; the actor enlivens with colouring, and finishes the piece.

The

The state of the Stage in this kingdom is truly unhappy: the common people have strange notions of its want of importance. These notions it is scarcely possible to remove: for where popular prejudice has reigned so long as to obtain the sanction of hereditary right, reason languishes in a state of captivity; the intellects are manacled; judgment driven into exile. In this case, great must be the abilities that can awake the slumbering senses, break the fetters of prepossession, and so far clear the mind, that every object may be viewed in a distinct and impartial light.

In various nations, in different ages, the character of the Stage has been variously represented, but seldom, very seldom, impartially. Nor is it any deviation from truth, to affirm, that no one institution whatever has been treated with so much undeserved severity. The immorality wherewith it has been principally charged, will subject me, I doubt not, to censure from prejudice and enthusiasm, for having profanely compared it to the pulpit: but if I stand acquitted in the eyes of  
judg-

judgment, taste, and learning, I shall think myself safe from the arrows of detraction. The objection of immorality is easily, is commonly made ; but it is hard, nay, impossible to support it, unless you would chuse to condemn the whole, because a very small part sacrifices to folly and vice. As well might it be urged, that the art of Printing should be utterly abolished, because the press has at some times belched out blasphemy, treason, and detraction : the art of Painting destroyed, because it has been prostituted to infamous purposes ; and Music utterly suppressed, because worked up to a spirit of frenzy, by the skill of Timotheus, the pupil of Aristotle, fired Persepolis, if the story deserves credit. As it is beyond dispute, that the number of pieces, daily exhibited afford salutary lessons to all degrees of people, lessons whose tendency amount to as much efficacy as any friends of society can wish, the Stage should at length be admitted to triumph over the clamours of prejudice, the rage of enthusiasm, and to be founded upon the *utile dulce* of Horace.

We

We have already granted, that some scenes are of a tendency too lascivious for modest ears; that they are apt to mislead reason, and excite irregular passions. But inveteracy has multiplied the number of these pieces far beyond the bounds of reality; at the same time giving such harsh, such invidious colouring to those that actually exist, that the man who does not chuse to give himself the trouble of examining, will be apt to credit the abuse, and condemn the abused. To cavil at an institution because some ill consequences may ensue from its toleration, is a mark of great weakness; a proof of a very superficial knowledge of life. In life there is not, there cannot be any absolute perfection. The most chaste, the most unimpassioned mind, will, at some time or other harbour ideas that clash with virtue. The most prudent men are often guilty of capital errors; and the devoutest may slip from the paths of virtue; the wisest legislators have proved their fallibility by leaving something for amendment, which escaped their penetration; and thro' all degrees of human invention, there runs a strain of imperfection: why then shall the stage be particularly stigmatized,

only



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only for sharing in the common deficiencies of all human institutions ?

Some foes to the Drama oppose it as pernicious to the middling rank of people : but this objection scarcely deserves an answer. People of all ranks require some recreation ; and as long as this very rational one comes within the compass of their purchase, it is surely preferable to gaming and drinking. As some creatures, from the natural construction of their parts, extract poison from the most salutary plants, so may the depravity and prostitution of a vicious imagination derive pernicious principles from the best morals ; as the scripture only afforded the earl of Rochester a subject of ridicule. But to urge the suppression of the Theatre from such argumentation, confutes itself ; with the same propriety it may be said, that criminal laws should be expunged, because a mistaken application of them has sometimes reached innocence.

“ If the Theatre,” says La Motte, in his ingenious essay on Poetry and Painting, “ were  
“ to be shut up, the Stage wholly silenced and  
“ suppressed, I believe the world, as bad as it  
“ is



“ is now, would be then ten times more wicked and debauched.” This was once the case at Milan : when Charles Barromeus took possession of the archbishopric, he, out of abundance of zeal and severity, shut up the play-house, and expelled the players, strollers, and minstrels, as debauchees and corrupters of mankind. He soon had reason to alter his opinion, for he found that the people ran into all manner of excesses ; and that wanting something to amuse and divert them, they committed the most horrid crimes by way of pastime. It was on this account he repented of his edict, recalled the banished players, and granted them a free use and liberty of the Stage. But without recurring to the Italian history for a proof of the hatred which ignorance and vice, when they sway, have to the Stage, we shall find a strong one at home ; and it has been justly remarked, that during the reign of anarchy and Oliver, it was prosecuted with enthusiastic violence.

In affirming that vicious or ridiculous characters are exhibited with any other view than to expose or render them contemptible ; the design of the poet is either mistaken, or  
misre-

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misrepresented ; for by judiciously contrasting the virtuous and the vicious, there are lights reflected upon the former, that render them more amiable and alluring ; a shade of horror and detestation is cast over the latter. Thus, according to its original institution, the Stage may be made to answer the most useful ends of society ; when it swerves from this, it deviates from its first intended usefulness, it loses of its perfection.

It cannot be denied, that sometimes the dramatic poet draws characters of such a nature, that he must repent of them in his cooler moments. But this abuse of Thalia happens only in two cases : either when the poet is naturally of a profligate disposition, or when necessity obliges him to stoop to please the taste of an age, of whose elegance and virtue we cannot greatly boast. The man who has used himself long to drinking wine to excess, will in time find himself obliged to have recourse to stronger liquors for the preserving his stomach in a proper tone. Thus, when looseness and immorality has for some time reigned with absolute dominion ; the decency and elegance which were its precursors, are at length

length laid aside, and grossness and extravagance introduced in their place. This was the state of England in the easy reign of Charles II. whose scepter was swayed by wit and wantonness. Buckingham then altered the Chances, a play that every well-wisher to the Drama must wish had never been written. Southern wrote some comedies, in which his jests are too broad, his double entendres too plain not to call a blush into the face of modesty. Buckingham, naturally a debauchee, rejoiced in his thus disgracing the Stage. Southern, a man of a very different turn, was forced to write for bread : had he not written in this strain, he must have starved ; yet he thought a very long life too short to repent of this prostitution of genius, to which he was compelled by the depraved taste of his audiences.

Vice is of a contagious nature : the people in this reign caught it from the court, and the disorder became general, while virtue and good sense fled from the blasted air. “ Nothing  
“ now,” says Cibber in his Apology, “ could  
“ be too loose or too low for the court ;” and the *London Cuckolds*, the most rank play that ever succeeded, was then in the highest favour.

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your. We have seen in our time, this shame to the British stage, keep its station, and constantly appear on the lord-mayor's day, till Taste and Garrick joining, among other reformations, banished it. Let me remark, to Rich's honour, that much about the same time, wherein so much was done at Drury-lane, for Virtue and the Stage; the *Rover*, or *Banished Cavalier* was revived at Covent-garden, which is one continued tale of bawdery; and in which a man appears stripped to his shirt, and stepping into bed to a whore. Can we, without regret, look back to the times of which we have been speaking, and see so much genuine wit and humour exhausted in the service of vice, such shining talents prostituted to such infamous ends? Can we, without grief, behold men of such genius, as Buckingham and Rochester, squandering the fortunes of kings in the gratifications of irregular appetites, without giving any attention to indigent merit, unless they found their vices flattered; and the greatest abilities prostituted to popular depravity. Had the wit, the humour, the talents which in these days were lavished in the service of folly and obscenity, been expended in the cause of virtue, what noble ornament had been now bequeathed,



queathed to the Theatre. But, alas! Mr. Johnson has elegantly observed, that

*Intrigue was plot, obscenity was wit.*

Guthrie says, that "Shakespeare brought the same men on the Stage whom he saw in the world." If the truth of this affirmation be allowed, good sense and virtue were in his days more fashionable than in ours; and hence did he derive, in part at least, the lively colouring of his stile, the sentiment diffused through his matter, and the propriety of his manners. This is a whimsical sort of tenet; but when Shakespeare is the subject, we may allow some people to be singular, and let that singularity pass as sterling judgment. But we cannot subscribe with implicit faith to this writer's assertion, being of opinion that the world is now very little better or worse than it was two thousand years since; and that had Shakespeare lived in any age, his talents would have taught him to have followed nature as he has done, and she is always the same; yet if the writings of that inimitable father of our Drama are a proof of the purity of the times in which he lived, we can produce specimens of good sense,

C

chastity



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chastity of stile, and exactitude of character in Addison, Steel, and poor abused Cibber, that will bespeak the good opinion of future ages in behalf of ours.

A mean scribbler, in a work which few people have seen, and still fewer read, after declaiming against the Stage with all the virulence and fury of a Collier, allows, that “there are to be found in Dramatic Pieces noble and excellent sentiments; and that it is possible to unite a Play wherein all the rules of the Drama are observed, and which shall be as holy and serious as any sermon that ever was preached; and there is no apparent impossibility of getting different persons to rehearse it in society.” And why not in a Playhouse? If it be really innocent to write or read a Dramatic Production, wherein can the crime consist of seeing it represented on a Stage? and if it be copied from the living examples of real life, a draught of the manners of the times, may we not as well shut our eyes from observing the world? Perhaps, if we examine into the merits and importance of the herd who write against the Theatre, we shall find the best part of them either ignorant

rant bigots, armed with zeal for the destruction of taste; or obscure scribblers, who affect the character of writers, and attack a favorite subject for that purpose, with false quotation, and willing misrepresentation. If Collier and Bedford have inveighed against the stage with great acrimony, have not Zoilus, Rymer, and Lauder, attempted to sully the character and injure the reputation of the most celebrated writers? Yet truth has at length prevailed, and the intrinsic worth of Homer, Shakespeare, Milton, and the Stage, will outlast ages of brass, while the fame of their invidious enemies shall melt and be forgotten, like tracks in snow, or ice in the sunbeam.



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### C H A P. II.

*Of Dramatic Entertainments in general; of Tragedy; a remark on the characters of the Orphan; the Fair Penitent; Jane Shore; of the modern method of making Tragedies; of the Roman Father, and Mallet's Eurydice.*

THE Stage, from its earliest institution, has assumed two different methods of applying its instructions to mankind. These are, Tragedy and Comedy; from them are derived other kinds of Dramatic Entertainments, of which, as well as the antiquity of the Drama, whether Tragic or Comic, we shall speak in their proper place. At present we shall confine ourselves to examine the nature, design, and end of Tragedy; in considering and commenting upon which with particular exactness, we find the most austere philosopher extremely intent. "Tragedy then," according to Aristotle, "is a public lesson, fraught with more instruction than even Philosophy itself, contributing more to the polish of society." "Its effects," according to him, transcend any thing that can be communicated  
either

either by the best books or the most eloquent harrangues, because it addresses the passions:" it alarms the senses; whereas books and simple oratory address themselves but to the ear, from whence they very seldom find a passage to the heart, by touching which alone man's refinement or reformation is compassed. It either assumes the appearance of public calamity or private distress; for if a dignified personage suffer in the cause of virtue, it is a public calamity; and a plague had been less injurious to the republic of Athens than the loss of an Aristides.

In these garbs it impresses the eye, which quickly conveys the living representations to the soul, by which they are lodged in the recesses of memory, whence the iron teeth of time can scarcely tear them out. The impression passed through the eye will last almost as long as the motion of the visual orb, while the precept of the school, the maxim of the pulpit, makes but a slight stay, and soon vanishes with a crowd of other ideas that but little concern us.

Who can behold, well acted, and not abhor, the ambition and cruelty of Richard the

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third, the pride and prodigality of Wolsey, the treachery and ingratitude of Iago, or the villainy and malice of Shylock? Who can see the equal patriot Brutus, the honest abused Othello, the old injured Lear, the gallant and distressed Horatius, without sharing in their different calamities, admiring and wishing to emulate their virtues? There is a certain moral sense of virtue, an innate generosity impressed on the mind of man in a greater or less degree, which interests us in the event of the performance, and inclines us to the applause of good, to the detestation of evil.

There are two imperfections in the human composition, which, in the opinion of the Stagyrite, Tragedy contributes to correct; pride and want of feeling. Will not the heart of man be humbled, when he sees that, in one capricious moment, the masters of the world have been enslaved; when he beholds a Bajazet stripped of power, and despairing in fetters; the glory of the East, the head of the Persian monarchy.

--- *Darius great and good,  
Fallen, fallen, fallen, fallen,  
Fallen from his high estate;*

*On*



*On earth the king, the father lies,*

*Bleeding, dying,*

*None supplying*

*One kind hand to close his eyes.*

Who can behold such a picture as this, well represented, without being melted into compassion, softened to humility, and reconciled to the dispensations of that wonderful Providence which has permitted such vicissitudes, and placed him beyond their reach? When the highest ranks in life are thus exposed to the inferior character, they are a lesson, preparing him to sustain, with less murmur, such disgraces as may be incidental to his station, and which from comparison lose much of their terror. Thus, by proper tragic exhibition, the mind of man is happily softened, and, at the same time, strengthened against accident, while its natural fears are tempered and worked up to a pitch of resolution that enables it to oppose the assaults of fortune, with due deference to the Sacred Hand that strikes. By Tragedy we are also taught to husband our pity, not to lavish it upon unworthy objects; for to lament the affliction of those who deserve to be miserable, is an injustice done to nature and reason.

In the Orphan, for example, neither the fall of Castalio or Polydore should excite our feeling; it should be reserved for the unhappy father and the injured daughter: whereas the brothers in their distresses meet only with the rewards due to their deserts; one being a perfidious, equivocating friend; the other, a wild, intemperate villain.

There is not one character that deserves compassion in the favourite Tragedy of the Fair Penitent, a title to which the heroine has no manner of right; her grief does not spring from compunction, but from a variety of passions which she is prevented from gratifying. She uses her husband like a dog, for behaving to her too much like a gentleman; and, like an infamous incendiary, breeds a quarrel between him and an honest man, who, through an equal attachment to her and honesty, endeavours to bring her back to her duty, and make her lead an easy life with a fond husband. The last character is indeed so clouded by the vivacity of Lothario, the spirit of Calista; the grief of Sciolto, and the stoic gravity of Horatio, that we have scarcely room to take any  
notice

notice of him, even when he is on the Stage. In short, the characters wherewith we are any way interested in this piece, justly merit their fate; the father for forcing his daughter to marry against her consent; the daughter for being an ill-judging, irreclaimable prostitute; and the gallant for being an abandoned proselyte of vice. Yet these are pictures, which, properly disposed, might have had a due effect, by creating a necessary abhorrence of the blemishes that stain them; whereas at present we see the Poet has endeavoured to render Lothario as amiable as possible, and the fall of him and Calista highly distressful.

There is another living Play of Mr. Rowe's; I say another, because, these two excepted, his Dramatic Pieces breathe only now and then; which has very different effects. The reader will perceive, without my naming it, that I mean *Jane Shore*. That unhappy woman is introduced as a convert to virtue; and while, by her persisting in the cause of honour, we see her sacrificed to ingratitude and cruelty, we are at liberty to weep her fate; tho' we must acknowledge the justice of that Being which thus repays her former crimes, at the

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same time that it punishes the perfidious Alicia and the wanton Hastings. In the pitiable end of Dumont, the Poet has been so happy, as to raise, in every feeling bosom, sensations of such a nature as would incline any one in the same circumstances to join in his beneficence, tho' previously assured that the thunder of tyranny should break in destruction over the head of him who held out relief.

Otway and Rowe, in their Dramatic Exhibitions, spoke more immediately to the heart than any of their successors. Few of our very modern Tragedies seem disposed to this end; in compassing which consists the greatest art of writing for the Stage, where nothing delights reason but what moves the affections, and interests the soul. One would imagine that the rhetoric which should warm the passions were now lost; since we scarcely see any thing but ill-contrived plots, cloathed with cold, meagre language; expressions without majesty; figures void of grace; characters meanly supported, and catastrophes inartfully wound up. So that were not Shakespeare, Rowe, and Otway, sometimes to step forth with uncontrollable dignity, we should be apt to think the  
end



end of Tragedy no longer subsisted in Britain; not all the varieties of the Roman Father could be able to preserve it a footing on the Stage, but for the exquisite feeling of a Garrick, which we once remember to have seen finely supported by the tenderness of a Cibber, the noble deportment of a Barry; who certainly, though secondary, appeared in this Play to vast advantage; for to be second to Cæsar, is almost supreme honour.

There is an Eurydice in being; the language; the characters and plot of which prove, that there is still among us one man capable of restoring Melpomene to her throne, would he shake off his indolence, and stoop from his bowers of happy ease and social joy, to correct the taste of a cold, dispirited age.





## C H A P. III.

*Of the different species of Tragedy: of Lady Macbeth; its propriety: some strictures on Shakspeare and Otway: of Tate's alteration of King Lear; of Addison's Cato; of our feelings when spectators of a Tragedy; and their cause.*

WE have before observed, that the Tragic Poet has but two ways of working his end of reformation, by terror and pity; and his means of creating them also are only twofold, viz. either by public or by private distresses. The former of these stand more remote from the common sphere of action, as recapitulating something grander, and does not therefore fall immediately under the apprehension of the audience in general. This distance adds a dignity to the scene, and possibly may create a proportionable degree of anxiety and concern in the beholder, because a body of people are supposed to suffer in the person of one illustrious man: on the other hand, the woes of domestic life, or of a private family, open in some all the springs of tenderness that can actuate the soul, which is  
more

more open to feel, from self-acknowledgement, the fortune and vicissitudes of a character that moves upon an equal footing. We shall not pretend to assert which of these two species of Tragedy are best ; we can only say, that we are differently affected by them, according to their different complexions, or degrees of sensibility.

To make our pleasures conduce to our profit, is a noble and very useful lesson : this is best done on the Stage, by blending a variety of passions, in forming the various characters, so that they may be real pictures of man as he is, not as he ought to be ; for a perfect character is,

*A faultless monster that the world ne'er saw.*

Some people are so delicate as to be offended at introducing such a villainous character on the stage as Lady Macbeth ; but if the character be drawn from history, we are to suppose it supplied by the world ; and those who can read mankind, will tell you, that they every day meet with people in whom ambition is as strong, and which, had they the same temptations, the same opportunity, would  
prompt

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prompt them to run equal, if not greater lengths of barbarity. In this case then Shakespeare was right in exhibiting her, because she appears detestable, and may affect some minds properly, by correcting in them the seeds of a passion so very hateful.

It is one essential duty of an author to be justly acquainted with the age, nation, and character of the personage he introduces in the Drama; this is what forms the manners of the piece, and was a knowledge in which Shakespeare did not always excel: he is guilty of many anachronisms, but in one thing, however, he is always exact; that is, in making his Romans speak like Romans, his Englishmen like Englishmen. This art makes his pieces so very strong, they always interest our affections, and command our admiration: Otway is happy in the former, but not so in the latter.

When a Dramatic Piece has a happy conclusion, tho' all the incidents leading to that conclusion are distressful, yet it cannot with propriety be called a Tragedy, because we depart from it with satisfaction; we feel none  
of

of that pity or terror wherewith we are impressed when we see virtue sacrificed to nefarious views, or villainy triumphant. For example, in Tate's alteration of Lear, the old man and his favourite daughter are both kept alive, and made happy, while all the vicious characters of the Play fall the victims of justice. This catastrophe sends away all the spectators exulting with gladness; and when we look back on the exhibition, and examine it from beginning to end, we find nothing that can induce us to alter our sensation. In some things it were injustice not to own that Tate has changed Shakespeare's plot for the better: in Shakespeare we see the king bringing in the body of his Cordelia, whom he supposes to have hanged herself: the picture here, with all its concomitants, raises disgust, and rather excites horror than creates pleasure. But Tate, to make amends for his judicious emendations, lest too much merit should accrue to him from them, has left out some of the finest speeches in the character of Lear, which Mr. Garrick has properly restored; and they are, I believe, retained by other performers.

Cato is one of those Plays that, from a double action, sends us away impressed with  
a mixed



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a mixed passion; we lament the fall of the patriot, we rejoice at the happiness of the lovers. The struggles of great men for laws and institutions that bear no very near resemblance to our own, and with which the majority of the spectators is but little acquainted, cannot be supposed to rouse or interest them to any great degree; therefore, to relieve them from a constant and wearisome attention to the sentiments of public virtue, Addison has introduced a love-affair between the daughter of the Censor and a young Numidian prince, his ally. This secondary plot, he imagined, enlivened the piece, and spoke more immediately to the heart, as exhibiting a sort of domestic distress, with the nature of which mankind in general may be supposed to be acquainted. Experiments of this nature, tho' justified by great examples, are dangerous; for two plots can seldom be so artfully interwoven, as to produce but one interest, but one passion. Though this is a task in which perhaps this great critic has not succeeded; yet such is the tendency of this Play, the noble sentiments with which it abounds, the spirit of liberty and patriotism which it breathes, that it must at all times be a suitable entertainment for a free people, and a  
strong



strong proof of the good effects of theatrical exhibitions. No part of it can be stigmatised with the names of party or faction: its intention is to excite a contempt of ease and danger, nay even of death itself, in the cause of our country; it means to inspire spirit and magnanimity, to render discord and division detestable.

Addison himself, than whom no writer endeavoured more at correctness, wrote his love-plot for the general view, though at the same time he feared it would be considered as a deviation from the antient models, and as a parenthesis in the Play. However, he referred it to the judgment of Sir Samuel Garth, who politely remarked to him, that it would be received with applause for two reasons: First, Because it was conforming to the general practice of modern Drama; and, secondly, because it was a delicate compliment to the fair-sex. Sir Samuel's judgment has been confirmed by the reception this episode has always met with, although Voltaire thinks it spoils the Play.

The ingenious David Hume of Edinburgh has published an essay, which he calls A Dissertation upon the subject of which we now treat; but, instead of pursuing the point, and communicating to us that pleasure and instruction which we might reasonably hope for, he presents us with an enquiry very apt here, viz. “into the cause of that unaccountable pleasure which the spectators of a well-wrote Tragedy receive from sorrow, terror, anxiety, and other passions which are in themselves disagreeable and uneasy.” In this dissertation he follows the opinion of Fontenelle, who, in his *Reflexions sur la Poetique*, observes, that in regard to Tragedy, whatever dominion the senses and imagination may usurp over reason, there still lurks at the bottom a certain idea of falsehood in the whole of what we see. This idea, tho’ weak and disguised, suffices to diminish the pain which we suffer from the misfortunes of those whom we love; to bring that affliction to such a pitch as reduces it to a pleasure. We weep for the misfortunes of a great man, to whom we are, no matter from what principle, attached, in the same instant we comfort ourselves with reflecting, that it

is nothing but a fiction; and it is precisely that mixture of sentiments which composes an agreeable sorrow, and supplies the tears that delight us. Lucretius has finely described this satisfaction; and we shall furnish the English reader with his sense, as translated by Dryden.

*'Tis pleasant safely to behold from shore,  
The rolling ship, and hear the tempest roar;  
Not that another's pain is our delight;  
But pains unfelt produce the pleasing sight.*

To this it may be added, that the force of eloquence contributes very much to those sensations; and that the impulse which we feel of sorrow, compassion, indignation, &c. receives a more forceable direction from the sentiments of beauty. The latter, being the predominant emotions, seize the whole mind, and convert the former into themselves, or at least tincture them so strongly as totally to alter their nature; and the soul being at the same time roused by passion, and charmed by eloquence, feels on the whole a strong movement, which is altogether delightful. The force of imagination, the energy of expression, the power of versification, and the charms

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of imitation, all naturally delight the mind; and when to these are joined some particular object that seizes on some affection, the pleasure still rises upon us by the conversion of this subordinate movement into that which predominates. Thus the passion that may be painful, when excited by a real object, derives a softening, a melioration, from the finer arts, so as to afford the highest entertainment.

In the rage of battle, or the blustering of a storm, all our thoughts recur to the preservation of Self; and that concern which must ensue from the apprehension of certain danger, occupies the whole soul; but he who *undangered* and safe sits near his little cottage on the brow of an inaccessible mountain, and thence beholds the havoc that ambition makes, or from a rock that overhangs the ocean, sees the labouring vessels contend with wind and waves, compassion and pity for the sufferers warm his bosom, while, at the same time, he has naturally an impulse of pleasure from comparing his present state with theirs, and finding it so much superior. Of the same nature is that sensation of pleasure which we feel at a Tragedy.

C H A P.



## CHAP. IV.

*Of Comedy; its end: of the Design of the Play of Every Man in his Humour: of the different species of Comedy: of the Careless Husband; how faulty; and how to be corrected: Terence and Steel compared.*

COMEDY is an image of common life: its intention is to reform the public follies or correct the taste, by throwing the vitiated or absurd manners of individuals into lights of ridicule and entertainment. Dryden somewhere says,

*Of all Dramatic Writing, Comic Wit,  
As 'tis the best, so 'tis most hard to hit.*

He who attempts it, ought to be well acquainted with mankind, the foibles of particulars, and the springs that actuate their different passions. Unless he also has from nature, as well as acquirement, a fund of wit and pleasantry that may not be easily exhausted, here he cannot hope to succeed; for his exhibition ought to carry with it that force of persuasion, that the spectator should be induced



to imagine himself absolutely in company with the personages, whose semblance only is before him; and that the Theatre was the World.

Comedy loses much of its force, unless we can compare the characters it presents with its originals; for they ought to be drawn from the groups that daily fall under the observation of every one. Of these there ought to be a proper assemblage, still taking care not to transcend the bounds of reason, truth, and probability. To this Menander owed his reputation in Greece: and Terence succeeded at Rome, because his conversation was Roman; his characters such as were daily seen in the streets of the mistress of the world. Terence did not, however, please so universally as Plautus, though, by the politer and more elegant of his countrymen, he was preferred, because the latter drew his images larger than the life, thereby making his impressions deeper, shewing ridicule and folly in a much stronger light, yet not exceeding the bounds of probability, which ought to be the comic Poet's infallible and constant guide. Without probability all wears the face of falsehood,  
and

and the performance fails of its intention, when the fruits appear to be entirely of imagination. When our errors are properly unmasked, and the latent qualities of the soul explained to itself, by a happy conjunction of wit and humour, we cannot avoid acknowledging the resemblance, owning the justness of the censure, and embracing instruction so pleasingly conveyed.

A Comedy ought to have one main design, that carries through it one or two characters in a manner more conspicuous than the rest: and to compass this design, a chain of pleasing events should contribute, so linked as to have the appearance of accidental introduction; to wear nothing of force; nothing strained, nor seemingly artful. In *Every Man in his Humour*, for example, the main design is to cure a wrong-headed husband of a ridiculous, ill-grounded jealousy; we never lose sight of the husband and wife through the whole Play, until we find them made friends, and the husband cured of his folly in the catastrophe.

Comedy may be divided into two species, genteel, and low: the first speaks the language

of polite life, of which Cibber's Careless Husband is a very fine specimen; and were it curtailed of one scene, which to me is vicious and indelicate, I should not fail to pronounce it not only the best Comedy in the English, but in any other language. There is something too gross in shewing Sir Charles Easy and Edging asleep in a bed-chamber; and though it furnishes an incident that illustrates the character of Lady Easy, decency would forgive the exhibition. The managers of the Irish Theatre, who have certainly a great deal of judgment, have judiciously introduced Lady Easy as if seeing this scene at a distance, so that they are not brought forward; but Sir Charles enters with the handkerchief in his hand, and the reflections that are put into his mouth very naturally follow: the confusion of Edging is sufficiently shewn in her running across the Stage when the bell rings. Thus the plot is carried smoothly on, and the main business kept in view, without the least breach of decency, or the smallest indecorum.

Low Comedy groups the meaner characters of life; it is more adapted to the populace, and rather diverts than instructs; it excites sudden

sudden gusts of mirth, short-lived *Laughter* holding both his sides; while genteel Comedy moves a settled smile of pleasure, that affects the mind like the beautiful serenity of a summer's morning. The comic scenes in Oroonoko, the Grave-diggers in Hamlet, are specimens of the former, that will always make us laugh, unless we remember the place in which we find them; and the obscenity of Southern's expression is particularly disgusting to a delicate ear. The latter is well displayed in the dialogue between Indiana and Bevil; but the vulgar only laugh at such elegant deportment; a passion so refined, is, in their opinion romantic, because superior to their ideas, which cannot divide love from sensuality: it is *Caviar to the general*; and though it met with the applause (which the author wished for) of every polished mind, yet these being but a small minority, would not have been able to have preserved it from sinking, had not Cibber happily infused into it something to please the oak-stick critics above stairs, who acknowledged their relations in Tom and Phillis; and as the cackling of geese saved the Capitol, so did this merry couple preserve an excellent Play from damnation.

Sir



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Sir Richard Steele seems to me to have been our Terence; for Terence was the first among the Romans who gave Comedy an exalted turn; who substituted simplicity, decency, and politeness, in the room of mean buffoonery, which he banished: he thus made entertainment really instructive; and Cæsar, who was as good a critic as he was an able warrior; and, to use Dr. Blackwell's words, "a fine gentleman," certainly did not consider leisurely the genius and character of Terence, when he condemned him, as wanting comic Force. He here confounded Farce and Comedy; for Terence certainly excelled in comic Writing, if Cicero's definition of Comedy will hold good, "that it is the imitation of life, the mirror of manners, and the representation of truth;" *Imitatio vitæ, speculum consuetudinis, imago veritatis.*

Sir Richard Steele, who was certainly the chastest of our comic Writers, was resolved, in the *Conscious Lovers*, to give a pure specimen of genteel Comedy; to raise an elegant and correct edifice, wherein none of those irregular pilasters, which he called the disgrace of the Drama, should be seen; no character



rafter beneath those of polite life. When he read this piece to the managers, they dozed over the perusal, and in the end unanimously condemned it, "as being too moral and serious for an English audience, and having in it not one laughing line." However, Mr. Cibber, who was a good judge of writing, as well as a great actor, saw into all its beauties, and offered to enliven it with the characters of Tom and Phillis. Sir Richard's necessities obliged him against his judgment to accept of the proposal: he, with reluctance, subscribed to the corrupted taste, which he heartily condemned. The spirit with which Colley executed his part is well known; and for some of the most pleasing speeches in the Play besides, we are indebted to his vast fund of humour. Nor would this master-piece of our Terence have succeeded, without the help of our Plautus.

Cibber never shewed more judgment than in his happily blending the characters of the Provoked Husband; or, A Journey to London; a Play that will live as long as the Stage itself: yet here the humour of John Moody has generally a better effect than the refined

refined distresses, the polished deportment of Lord Townley; and the reason is plain, because the manners and language of Moody fall under the cognizance of every understanding; but few can relish Lord Townley, except those who have had an habitual acquaintance with polite life, joined to some taste. So that characters of low life are thrown into genteel Comedy to make it go down the better: the amusement palliates the instruction; gives force to the moral and the serious.

Masters in Painting meet with a similar fate; the drolls of Hemskirke, the caracaturas of Hogarth, will always give more pleasure, than the ceiling of Whitehall, by Rubens; the gallery at Hampton-Court, by Raphael. The Harlot's Progress, by Hogarth, will be always universally liked, while his Ascension, in the cathedral of Bristol, and his Paul preaching at Athens, will strike only the discerning few, who are acquainted with history, manners, and life: the former displays common scenes, of which every man can judge, and all consequently confess the power of the master.

## C H A P. V.

*Some of Congreve's characters, whence taken; of the defects of the Spanish Drama; of the progress of Theatrical Entertainments among the Romans, both antient and modern; of the Italian Drama at this day; of the French Stage; of the English Comedy.*

WHETHER the design of the Comic Poet be unitedly to instruct and entertain, or to entertain only, his figures should be such as can at first be recognized; every body will subscribe to the likenesses of Colonel Bluff and Sir Joseph Wittol, while Captain Bobadil and Master Stephen, the originals from which they are drawn, shall not give near so much satisfaction, because they have in them less of modern manners, consequently seem to have less of nature; for, tho' nature is always the same, yet she often changes her dress. To deviate from her, is to give an opening to censure; and malice shall call it detection, because people form their ideas from what they see daily practised, and think themselves judges of Comedy, as upon this practice it ought to be planned. Upon the cri-

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tical composition, few of them pretend to determine.

Comedy is a structure, the beauties and perfections of each individual part of which falls under general cognizance, while, on the proportion and blending the whole, they cannot pretend to sit in judgment. On the other hand, the characters of Tragedy are above the common discernment, being assisted by elevation of style, boldness of metaphor, high-sounding epithets, and perhaps dignity of personage; so that vulgar understandings, having their ears charmed, and their eyes pleased, rest contented without presuming to censure; as at a country fair the glare of the Mountebank's appearance, the flourishes of his language, and his large promises, impress the peasants with a notion of the value and efficacy of his drugs, which are in themselves really worth little. It does not seldom happen that the tragic potion is of the same nature; from the parade of the Theatre, it obtains the semblance of merit, of which it is in reality void.

Comedy and Tragedy, each of them, properly considered, lead to the same useful end;  
that



that of instruction, by different vehicles : one addresses the affections, rouses the passions, and speaks to the heart with solemn and serious lessons ; its aspect is severe, its reproof tries us to the quick, and often “ most horribly (to use a phrase of Shakespeare’s) shakes our disposition :” the other approaches with an easy familiarity, sits down with us, and, putting on our very characters, shews our follies or mistakes with such humour and ridicule, that we often acknowledge the reprimand, and are corrected : like the jesters of old, it laughs us into regularity.

The antient Comic Writers drew their scenes from living manners ; they grouped a variety of humours that were general, otherwise a Comic Character is not truly valuable ; because, unless it strikes every spectator, it cannot afford proper instruction. A man of but mean talents may turn a particular character into ridicule, and expose a person infinitely more valuable to society than himself ; but from the affectations and absurdities of many, to compile one Comic Character that may be useful while it diverts, and, at the same time, meet the approbation of correct judgment  
and



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and refined taste, is a task which none but a great genius can fulfil. Ben Jonson has been accused of shewing himself in this poor confined light by the Morose of his Silent Woman, which he is supposed to have drawn from a person of his own acquaintance, who had this extravagant turn. Congreve, in a letter to Dennis, has defended him admirably, and proved, that the immortal Ben

*Expos'd no single fop, but laid the load  
More equally; and spread the folly broad.*

BUCK. Ess. on Poetry.

Nor is this solely his virtue: our Comic Writers in general paint from the diversity of humours every where prevailing; and in this they come nearer the antient Comedy than either the Spanish, Italian, or French.

The Spaniards will have it, that they draw the sources of their Comic Wit from life: but they are mistaken; they see things only at a short distance, and imagine, that the little gallantries and intrigues of Madrid and Seville are those of the world. This is the life from which they copy; and it is a life which every body else must own peculiar to themselves.

selves. They are indeed fruitful in invention, and have a variety of incidents, which are very pleasing. The reason is plain: a woman in Spain is kept as close as a miser keeps guineas; so that the Poet is forced to form a thousand contrivances to bring her to the arms of her gallant; and, if he copies from what he knows to be daily practised among his country people, he contrives that some disappointment divides them even at the critical minute, until the catastrophe, which is generally wound up with the lovers being made happy. The Spanish Comedy is neither over regular, nor entirely probable; because the people retain a relish of the African gallantry; of the extraordinary manners of the Moors, from whom they mostly deduce their original. Both sexes, in Spain, would think that passion cool and indifferent, which was not accompanied by some of the extravagancies to be found in their old books of chivalry; for it is but of late years they have been cured of those romantic notions, inspired by knight-errantry, and so happily ridiculed, though not eradicated, by Cervantes; nay, in the country of Spain, they are far, even at this day, from being exploded.

E

When

When the Roman republic was in its fullness of glory, when conquest every where graced her arms, Liberty and Virtue were concomitants of her banners, and the world owned her sovereignty, her rough honest sons delighted in Tragic Exhibitions, and their Theatrical Examples were such as pleased their fierceness and austerity, while they strengthened their natural inclination to war, by which they maintained their freedom, their grandeur and superiority over mankind. These images of antient virtue grew out of favour with the people when the city sunk into corruption: they gave way to Comedy, which was calculated to soften their already relaxed disposition; to amuse and indulge their vacant hours.

Melpomene, indeed, resumed her reign in the time of the civil wars; and even Cæsar became her votary, and wrote a Tragedy. Many of the greatest men in the state did the same. However, she was soon dethroned by a settled peace: Augustus became her master, and pleasures of the most soft and delightful nature were let loose upon her degenerating sons, to prevent them from seeing  
their

their state. They drank largely of intoxication : *et ruunt*, says Tacitus, *in servitium*, "and rush into bondage." The Comic Muse now took entire possession of the Theatre, and Tragedy was now and then admitted to come forward ; but it was rarely, like a Roman, endued with the spirit of his ancestors. Seneca wrote, in the reign of Nero, those melancholy pieces which he has bequeathed us ; and they abound with horrors, such as the age inspired.

Corruption became, about this time, as universal as in Britain before the days of Pitt, and shameless Vice shewed her gorgon head in the public streets without rebuke : it was now that Pantomime made her grotesque appearance, and Tragedy and Comedy were forced to cede to unmeaning folly : the great were no longer excited to virtuous actions, or deterred from vicious ones, by the sublime examples of Melpomene. Thalia was no more permitted, with her insinuating lessons, to correct licentiousness, to instruct the ignorant : distorted gesticulations, indelicate attitudes, and postures at which honesty would blush, took place of sense and wit : the frequenters



of the Theatre no longer sought out rational amusements, but merely to divert, and indulge the vitiated imagination with figures of voluptuousness.

The modern Italians are warmed with the same fun; they stalk over the same ground, that was possessed by the antient Romans; but they are strangers to their virtues, the traces of which are only to be found in history: therefore they have scarcely any Tragedy; for they do not want to be excited to noble or arduous tasks: their inclinations lead them to voluptuousness and pleasure; and the Plays they have now among them are calculated to no other end but that of indulging this enervate tendency: they are a strange mixture of speaking and mummary, without any instruction, and with very little meaning, of which many of my readers must have had a recent and convincing proof in the exhibitions of Burlettas, made, about three years since, by the Giardino family, in the Hay-Market: the admirable action, indeed, of La Spiletta must have made a lasting impression, while no one that understands Italian would chuse to retain a syllable of the writing. The whole family had  
merit,

merit, considered as Buffoons; and the Italian Comedians are for the most part little better. I question whether the antient mimes excelled them in attitudes, postures, agility, and grimace: they have a surprising power of distorting the countenance, and perhaps nothing was ever more entertaining than the various faces made by La Spiletta and her father, crying, in one of these pieces. A scene of this sort must move the visible faculties of a stoic; and their acting must please, while the sentiment must have a contrary effect. They cannot be properly called Comedies, because they have no regular plot: the scenes are unconnected, and they are void of character or composition. Nay, it often happens at Paris, that it is not much more than the impertinencies of a parcel of merry-andrews, who put their own nonsense into the mouth of the character they assume; even where the author speaks, it is so much bombast, so much in the stile of Hurlothrombo, that you must be disgusted: and, with Bocalini's Lacedemonian, I would prefer the gallies rather than being confined (not with him to Guicciardini, but) to a constant attendance on the Italian Comedy. Let it be observed here, that, though I deliver my sen-

timents freely upon the Italian Comedy, and condemn it on the whole, yet I allow there are some fine exceptions to my general tenet, (besides the Amyntor of Taffo, the *Pastor fido* of Guarini, &c.) wherein there is spirit, humour, and sentiment; and I am of opinion, that the pieces of Terence and Plautus were chaunted forth in the same manner, as well as the whole antient Comedy.

The French Comedy is more regular and more probable. In France, that strain of gallantry that reigns in their Comedy, runs thro' their manners. Intrigue is a science, and a man approaches a woman step by step: he gains ground by inches, like a general besieging a town. It is a respect which the women insist upon, because their commerce with mankind, the freedom wherein their country's custom indulges them, permits them to pick and chuse; and, in that case, they are only to be won by deference and assiduity. This is a vein to be found in all Moliere's Comedies, intermixed with characters of humour so strongly painted, such excellent copies from the great book of life, that every body must be struck with the semblance, and applaud.

His

His humorous characters are neither French, Spanish, nor English: they are citizens of the world, and their exactness must be acknowledged by all nations. There is this common defect in the French Comedy, and I am afraid it extends to their Tragedy, that, exclusive of their characters of humour, all the personages are French, be the scene laid where it will. They fail in manners as well as design, but not in sentiment and fancy: they are as civil upon the Stage as off it; but that civility tires an Englishman, who wants something to rouse his inactive sluggish disposition, and to keep him awake. This tediousness is owing to their defect of genius: they have not the fire requisite to animate, and it is right they should be civil, though insipid; for if they cannot entirely please, it is but just they should not offend.

The French Comic Authors, fearful of stretching their talents too far, do not incline to raise your laughter to too great a pitch, but politely jog on in an easy pace that lulls you to sleep. Their characters are few: they have seldom an under-plot, and they content themselves with carrying on only one design:



they copy the antients too closely in adhering to rule and regularity, while we keep those noble originals too much at a distance : this is owing rather to a want of taste in our audiences, which, could we supply, we should outdo the French in their own province : but we must have various incidents, episodes interwoven, more business carried on than they can bear, and a variety of performers. However, it must be granted, that, with all their taste, our authors excel them as much in genius as our soldiers do in courage. Shakespeare and Jonson are as far beyond Corneille and Moliere, as Marlborough was beyond Tallard, Pitt superior to Louvois.

The English Comedy in the hands of Congreve, Cibber, and Vanbrugh, answers Aristotle's definition of antient Comedy, " that it is an imitation of the actions of subordinate characters ;" I mean, subordinate in manners, not in quality ; its intention being to lash the commonest vices ; to detect the general practices of the loosest sort of livers, who, by a ridiculous delineation of themselves, are to be laughed out of their faults and follies, while good people are, at their expence, warned and entertained.

entertained. Thus we see blended in Comedy pleasure and utility. To promote these ends, the Comic Poet is obliged to present you with characters in which vice and folly are happily mixed; and it would be unjust to charge the defects on which they are founded, either to the private sentiment or persuasion of the writer. It may be imagined, with equal probability, that Hogarth himself sits for his caricatures.

In the part of Fondlewife, we have a fine image of the unnatural connection between tottering old-age, and full-blooded, blooming youth; and in the Old Batchelor, from whom the Play takes its title, we see a battered debauchee, who is an utter foe to order and decency, struggling against regularity; yet we know that, when Congreve wrote this Comedy, he was not twenty years old. We have started this hint only because Collier has made use of it falsely and unfairly, the better to support his attack upon the morality and virtuous use of the Stage. This reverend piece of inflammatory zeal lays about him most unmercifully: he scruples neither misrepresentation nor false transcription; and Congreve suffers

suffers severely under his hands. He, "who (in the opinion of all good judges, as well as Voltaire) raised the glory of Comedy to a greater height than any English writer before or since his time. His Plays were few, but in their kind excellent: they abound with characters all shadowed with delicacy: their language is every where that of men of fashion, but their actions are those of knaves; a proof that he was perfectly well acquainted with human nature, and kept what we call polite company."

Those who are well acquainted with the works of Dramatic Authors, will often find Congreve having recourse to his reading; but then he adopts or imitates in so masterly a manner, that whatever he touches he turns, like Midas, into gold. His Sir Joseph and Colonel Bluff are plainly copies of Jonson's Bobadil and Master Stephen; and those who will be at the pains to compare *Petulant*, in the *Way of the World*, with Shakespeare's *Bardolph*, will soon trace out the likeness, and mark the original; yet this gentleman used to declare he was not obliged to any preceding author for the slightest hint of character,

except

except to Mrs. Benn, from whose Belliardo, in The Emperor of the Moon, he confessed he drew his Foresight. Notwithstanding this declaration, we can find him making free with Terence, from whose Syrus, in the Self-Tormentor, he has copied his Maskwell, whom, through the whole piece, he has luckily employed, and nobly supported. Of the Play of the Double Dealer, in which this character is introduced, we may safely say, that none exceeds it in ease, elegance, and spirit of dialogue; force, and variety of natural character: that for plot, contrivance, and conduct; for intrigue and catastrophe, it is the *facile princeps* of all Dramatic Writing. We should have mentioned wit, but that is not perhaps the immediate object of Comedy: as to exact purity, the Comic Writers of Congreve's time were no way remarkable for paying it great deference.





## C H A P. VI.

*Of Farce.*

**F**ARCE is founded on chimera and improbability; the events are unnatural, the humour forced, and it is, in the opinion of Dryden, a compound of extravagancies, fit only to entertain such people as are judges of neither men nor manners: it appeals entirely to the fancy; delights with oddity, and unexpected turns: it has in one thing indeed the same effect as Comedy, viz. it produces laughter; but it is not a laughter founded upon reason, excited by the check given to folly, the reproof to ignorance, or the lash to corruption. Perhaps, if we enquire into the natural cause of the pleasure we feel from Farce, we shall find it to be the same that leads women to feed on chalk, and make dirt-pies; a vitiated appetite: but this is so common, that he, who writes down to it, stands a better chance of pleasing, than he whose refined genius excels in painting nature, and exhibiting probability. It is, however, a species of the Drama very difficult to be carried into execution; great nicety being requisite to link improbabilities

probabilities in such a manner, that they shall not disgust.

We have but very few petite pieces in our language that can be properly called Farces ; the most remarkable are, *Duke and No Duke*, and *The Devil to Pay*. The first was originally written under the title of *Trappolin*, supposed a Prince, by Sir Aston Cockain, a Derbyshire knight, who lived in the days of wit and Charles the second, and borrowed the plot from Italy. Tate brought it on the Stage under the former name ; and it stands a good chance of keeping its place upon any Theatre where Woodward plays, who is excellent in *Trappolin* ; and who has the art of cloathing this character (though in itself improbable) with all the possible appearances of truth and reality.

The scene of *Duke and No Duke* is laid in Florence, and its environs ; from whence it is supposed, that *Trappolin*, a notorious pimp, is banished by two noblemen, who have the management of public affairs, during the absence of the Duke. A certain Magician, whom the Duke had dislodged, throws himself

self in the way of Trappolin, whose ridiculous fright is very laughable; and who is, by the power of the Conjuror, transformed into the likeness of the absent Duke, and bade to return to the city, and take upon him the reins of government. He does so; and, you may be sure, the absurdity of his deportment causes as much surprize as it does confusion; nor is the entertainment that it gives unsatisfactory. The real Duke at length comes home, and some comical incidents arise from his difference of disposition: he meets with and collars the impostor, who throws that dust in his eyes the Father Conjuror had given him, with orders to use it in time of extremity. It gives the Duke the appearance of Trappolin, and he is turned out of court. At length, however, the Conjuror relenting, makes his peace with the Duke; restores things to their original state; Trappolin promises to live honest with Flametta; and the Duke forgives him.

I cannot say that I ever saw this piece without being entertained; yet, on reflection, it will appear to want every kind of moral and probability.

probability. However, tho' the plot is forced, the humour is well adapted to the characters, which are not improperly sustained, nor are the improbabilities badly linked.

The Devil to Pay is too well known to require any comment ; the plot is of a similar nature with that of Duke and No Duke ; it has much less pleasantry in it ; but the place is supplied with easy songs and familiar tunes, which are in every body's mouth. For my own part, I would chuse to leave the Theatre impressed by that gloomy pleasure which I feel from the sublimity of Shakespeare, or the tenderness of Otway ; and not to have it dissipated by Farce : yet it is perhaps a dissipation necessary in this kingdom, where the temperature of the air inclines to gloom and melancholy ; a disposition to which we also owe the speaking of comic Epilogues after Tragedies.

We have indeed a species of Drama, which, though it takes the place of Farce, cannot properly be called so, because it answers all the ends of Comedy, commixing use with entertainment. Such is Garrick's fine piece of *Lethe*, Foote's *Englishman at Paris*, and his  
Englishman



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Englishman returned from Paris. This is a sort of writing of which our Roscius gave the first example, by presenting us with sketches of absurdity and ridiculous characters, finely calculated to reform. His Lord Chalkstone, in particular, is a capital production, and we are only sorry to have so little of him : it is a character in itself alone sufficient to support a Comedy. Were this old lecher shewn in more lights, he would entertain in all ; would he not shine, were his fretfulness to be displayed in disappointing him in amour ; in exposing him in intrigue ; in giving him a daughter disobedient through his own means ? The author will excuse me for these hints, to which allow me to add another ; viz. That he would please to consider our scarcity of Comedy, and carry them into execution.



CHAP.

## C H A P. VII.

*Of Opera; Theatrical Music; and Pantomime.*

ONE of our greatest writers defines an Opera to be a poetical tale, represented upon the Stage by performers who sing, being assisted by Musical Instruments, Scenes, Machines, &c. It is a sort of Dramatic Entertainment, which had its first birth in Italy; either from the gleanings of the Greek and Roman Theatre, which had all those ornaments, or brought from the Zambras, or royal feasts of Spain, in the time of the Moors; the warlike part of which, such as tilting, running at the ring, being left out, and the Music, Dancing, and Scenery retained and connected, the exhibition appeared to have something of the nature of this curious diversion. It is of a pretty old standing at the Italian courts, being used for the celebration either of the birth or marriage of some of the dukes or princes; and the *Pastor fido* was composed in honour of the nuptials of a duke of Savoy. They are now indeed become more general, and have been for some time past tolerated among us, or rather encouraged in so princely a man-

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ner,

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ner, that common sense must blush at the review.

There was a time when we were remarkable for rational and useful diversions, before that found assumed the place of sense; when we had a true relish for the polite arts; when we could enjoy and digest the manly sense of Shakespeare, the correct drawing of Jonson; until our taste was vitiated by a corruption of these exotics, that are unnatural to our climate, inconsistent with our national genius. One would imagine we had lost that solidity of thinking and judging of which we once boasted; which was the characteristic of the nation. This stigma is owing to the exportation of some of our fools of rank and fortune, who are in a situation considerable enough to give the original of a fashion, however absurd or ridiculous, on their return home; when they are sure to bring back with them nothing but the follies of the nations they have visited, together with a sincere contempt for their country, and every thing of British growth.

To correct abuse, to ridicule absurdity, detect folly; or, on the other hand, to present characters

characters worthy being imitated, or to fire the breast with noble passions, is the very essence of Theatrical Entertainments. If the Opera contributes to any of these ends, I will admit of its utility; but this will not, I believe, be maintained by even its most zealous friends.

Can any thing be more ridiculous or contemptible, than to see an effeminate treble-voiced fellow, whose tones are unnatural, and those acquired by committing a violence upon nature, pretend to personate an hero or a lover, without either majesty or spirit? It is impossible for an Actor to move his audience, unless he feels; and we know it is out of the power of these wretches to feel, because they are made incapable. I must own, that when I see that Alexander, for whose ambition the world was too small, the intrepid Cato, the gallant Cæsar, or the mighty Xerxes, represented by a shadow of a man, my indignation is raised: nay, what by a strengthful manly exhibition would have hurried our passions like the waves under the influence of the tempestuous North, has, by this strange appearance, a contrary effect: instead of sharing in



the happiness or misery of the greatest personages that ever lived, we are worked up to contempt, and our ears become passively admittive of sounds that have no effect upon our minds.

As we are generally so complaisant to ourselves as to imagine the reasonable part of mankind see things in the same point of view that we do, I am vain enough to think all people of real taste look upon the Opera as I do, and feel a contempt for those pitiable individuals who could make up the salary of a Farinelli six thousand pounds in one year; and who think a pension of fifteen hundred or two thousand pounds, besides presents, too little for a Mingotti, a Ricciarelli, or a Mattei; when a Gray, an Armstrong, a Mason, and an Akenfide, shall write with all the fire of Apollo, and the inspiration of Parnassus, without one of those lavish favourites of fortune shewing either munificence or taste enough to honour themselves with patronizing those ornaments of Britain, nay of the world.

Where the genius of a nation preserves its sublimity of character, inspires valour and liberality

rality, the Stage will maintain its first influence, and promote the happiness of society; the scene will glow with greatness, and reflect the spirit of the auditors; the happiness resulting from the practice of virtue, the miseries arising from a continuance in vice, will engage the attention, and speak to the heart through the ear, which will neither enjoy nor pardon the exhibition that is void of instruction or animation: on the contrary, when a nation draws towards a period of glory, where vice infects every rank, and depravity makes dullness impudent; where the men dismiss shame, the women forget modesty, the Stage will first be touched with, and sink under the infection; the Music will be loose and enervate, the Theatre will be no more considered as the school of wisdom, but both tragic and comic energy dwindle into lightness and buffoonery. This period Garrick has, with giant-force, repelled.

As we receive no manner of advantage from Opera, the vast sums that are required by, and granted to, these enervate performers, is truly to be lamented: their incomes are larger than those attending upon the first

offices under the crown, executed by men of the first quality. Those who have with ability and fortune served their country for twenty or thirty years, think their labours well repaid if they can procure a commission, or a place of three or four hundred pounds a year for a son. An officer grown grey in her service, sinking under age and fatigue, is satisfied with half-pay, whilst a wretch who has talents only to do mischief, who enervates and weakens that roughness whereby we are characterised the bravest nation in Europe, shall be better paid for his power of corrupting, than our noblest or bravest fellows for their best services.

I must confess, indeed, that the dresses and decorations of the Opera charm me, the machinery surprizes me, and I find the Music enrapturing; the whole, taken together, has often the air of miracle, and, in spite of all its defects, delights me: but this delight is short-lived; the mind begins to languish for food, and the eyes and ears become wearied of the length of the entertainment. At first, indeed, the unity of the concords, and variety of instruments and voices, must have their proper effect: but their continuance palls upon the ear;  
the

the sweetest modulations assume sounds fatiguing and confused; and the frequency of tedious recitatives completes the disgust. The soul, having attended long without being sensibly impressed, gives way to trifling meditation; and the time, place, and action are forgotten, because the subject and verses are generally very indifferent.

If the mind be dissatisfied, it is in vain to attempt pleasing the eye or captivating the ear; and a flimsy subject poorly worked up, though supported by pompous scenery and grand dress, is like a kitchen-maid, without figure or deportment, equipped with her mistress's cloaths. I cannot help adding, that the perpetual singing hurts me; and the absurdity of managing the commonest matters of life by way of sing-song, is glaring. Who is there, in his right wits, that ever sung out his commands to his servants? or imparted, in that manner, a secret to a friend? Who can hear the deliberations of council managed by air and recitative? or orders of battle sweetly warbled out, and the sword and pike beat proper time? Does not this destroy the sem-



blance of reality, and throw the entertainment into a light of ridicule? Besides, we forget the hero or personage that appears, and do homage to the musician. It is absolutely impossible for the imagination to reconcile itself to the sights of a hero or heroine, breaking out, amidst the emotions of the most violent passion, into a melodious air: and I remember to have seen an Italian Opera, in which a woman, called away upon business that required immediate attendance, staid first to sing a song.

Dryden remarks, that the multiplicity of monosyllables, and those too encumbered with consonants, which are to be found in the English language, renders it less fit for Music than the Italian; the natural cadence of which is melodious, the common dialogue perfect recitative, and much more harmonious than Dutch Poetry. The Italian seems as it were invented purposely for Music and Versification, the words abounding with vowels, and almost all, a few monosyllables excepted, terminating in them. It has withall derived so much copiousness and eloquence from the Greek and Latin, in the composition and formation of

words; it has passed through such a continued course of refinement since the days of Dante, who lived four hundred years ago, that it may now be justly stiled the most learned, correct, and beautiful of all modern tongues.

It would be the greatest insult to our taste, and an injury to merit, as we are upon the subject of Italian Operas, not to take notice, that Italy now enjoys, in her Metastasio, a genius that does her as much honour as Corneille does to France, or, almost, as Shakespeare to England. To him we owe a variety of Operas, that prove him a glory to his country; and we know not whether to give the preference to his judicious choice of subject, the sublimity of his language, the strength of his characters, the turn of his sentiments, the use he makes of and his power over the passions, the beauty of his images, the surprize of his incidents, or the masterly manner in which his catastrophes are brought about. Perhaps no man has ever been so careful of conforming to the unities of time and action as Metastasio; nay, that of place he seldom violates: if he does, it appears to have been unavoidable. He neither enslaves himself to rhyme

rhime nor to equal measure. He rhimes sometimes, and sometimes uses a metre of seven and often of eight syllables. This liberty carries with it a peculiar beauty, because it eases the ear of the fatigue that it must always suffer from the monotony of rhyme; and gives life to the action, ease and spirit to the sentiment; and the Italian language, whether rhimed or not, boasts a cadence, and carries with it a proper harmony, which is not at all ungrateful to an English ear.

It must be owned, that, were all the Italian Operas such as his, they might prove an entertainment to the most refined understanding, provided one could be brought to overlook the transacting the commonest affairs with a fiddle and lute.

With us, the encouragement given to Operas has its birth rather in blind harmony than elegant taste; for it is a question, whether nine out of ten of the subscribers understand either a word of Italian or a note in Music.

From what I have premised, let it not be imagined that I condemn musical entertainments

ments on the Stage ; on the contrary, I think they add grace, and communicate new life to the Theatre, when properly introduced. For example : sacrifices, epithalamiums, and dirges, with whatever relates to the service of the gods, may be sung, because it is the practice of all nations ; and it may be allowed to a lover, or to alleviate distress, without impropriety. The scene in the second act of Merope, wherein that unhappy mother is about to sacrifice her own son, is beautifully enlivened with us by the genius of Dr. Boyce's composition. What prodigious talents has not Arne shewn in his Rosamond, his Comus, and his Alfred ! How happy has he been in expressing every where the passions ! what tenderness is there in King Henry's song, beginning

*Was ever nymph like Rosamond ?*

What spirit, what fire in

*Rise glory, rise.*

What joy and festivity in the revelry of Comus' followers ; how delightfully melancholy is the pastoral song in that performance, or the

*Sweet valley, say, &c.*

of



of Alfred. We have the example of the chafteft Stage in the world for the introduction of Mufic; I mean, the choruffes of the Greek Tragedians, and the approbation of Horace; authorities more than fufficient to juftify them, befides the animated variety they give to the fcene. In the compositions intended for the Stage, the Poet and Mufician ought to act entirely in concert; the words fhould be adapted to the Mufic, and the Mufic to the words; that is, it fhould be noble, lively, bold, furious, graceful, tender, or even plaintive, according to the exigence of the fituation; and of this Arne is always particularly careful; nor does Dr. Boyce feem to be lefs exact.

I know not whether Handel's Oratorios fall under the denomination of a Theatrical Entertainment; but as they are annually exhibited at a Theatre, it is but juft to obferve, that he is now allowed by all Europe to be the greateft Mufical Genius that ever lived: he has the art of finely adapting found to fenfe; of fpeaking to the heart with as much command as Timotheus: he at once touches the paffions; and the grandeur of his choruffes,  
the

the variety and number of instruments and voices to which he adapts them, are inimitable and astonishing. There is a grandeur in Purcel's Music that is elevating, and will always please: there is as much true genius in the Music which he composed for Macbeth, as in creating the Witches; and his song of *Britons strike home* will immortalize him eternally, because in the mouth of every Englishman, and equally pleasing to the most refined taste, and the most vulgar capacity.

Before we dismiss you from this our first part, we shall say a word or two concerning a species of entertainment now in full possession of the Stage, under the denomination of Pantomimes; or, Harlequin Entertainments. These are calculated merely to please the eye, and sometimes also the ear, when the Music accompanying the action is good, and indeed it is seldom bad. They rarely have a settled plot, neither are their scenes connected.

Harlequin is generally supposed to be some being under the power of enchantment, in love with, and beloved by, Colombine; but crossed in all his designs by Pantaloon her father,

ther, his man Pierrot, and the Squire who courts her. Harlequin's only wit consists in his activity, displayed in escaping from them either by assuming another form, turning a bed-chamber into a garden, a tavern into a church, or hunting his pursuers with spirits. After a number of pursuits, crossings, turnings, and transformations, some god or superior being interposes in favour of the enchanter Harlequin, makes him friends with his pursuers, and gives him Colombine for a wife.

As these entertainments are of such a nature that they convey no moral, and their exhibition serves only to efface the impression, however useful or instructive, that may have been made upon the mind by an elegant Comedy or a fine Tragedy, every body, who wishes well to the Stage, would rejoice to see them banished, they abound so much with the ridiculous and absurd. The Harlequin Entertainment was first set on foot by a French Actor, who gave his name to it. It consisted, according to his plan, of a certain union of incidents, in running through which he and his fellow-performers (who, if I do not mistake, bequeathed their respective names, as  
Pierrot,

Piérrot, Colombine, &c. to their respective characters) spoke a good deal extempore; and being none of them without wit, their repartees pleased the populace, and these diversions came into vogue.

Whether the dancing-master, whose character is too well known to need illustration, endeavoured to revive the manner of the antient mimes, which expressed, by dumb-shew and dancing, a variety of actions and passions; and to his various characters he gave the foreign names by which they are now distinguished. The first of his representations was made in 1716, under the title of *The Loves of Mars and Venus*, in which the scenery was very fine, and the dancing just and well executed. There certainly was more pleasure in seeing the characters express the passions in dance, than in running about. As Mr. Dryden mentions, in one of his Prologues, good sense being banished for Harlequin, it may be objected against what I here advance, as if Pantomimes were then known. To this I reply, that there was a speaking Harlequin brought into the *Emperor of the Moon*, a very ridiculous piece written by Mrs. Behn, and played



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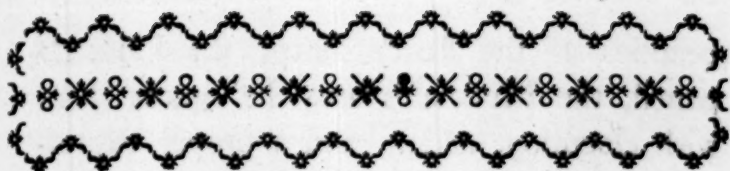
in the year 1687, on account of its novelty, with great success, which mortified very much Dryden and his brother bards. Entertainments of this nature are fit only for weak minds, which cannot bear the impressions of reflection; and the Managers are only excusable in exhibiting them, inasmuch as it is inconsistent with honesty to advise them

*To be wise to empty boxes.*

END of the FIRST PART.

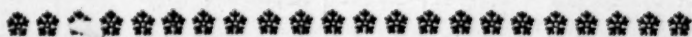


PART



## P A R T II.

### Of the A R T of A C T I N G.



#### C H A P. I.

*Acting defined ; general observations on the Art :  
the essential requisites for forming a complete  
Actor, &c.*

**A**CTING is the most perfect of all the imitative Arts, as being made up of all that is beautiful in Poetry, Painting, and Music. The Poet can only present persons and things to the mental eye ; the Painter, with artful blending of light and shade, mellows and softens them to the corporal ; the Musician modulates the different tones and inflections of the voice (or instrument) to convey a variety of passions ; but life and motion are derived from the Actor : he unites all the  
G beauties

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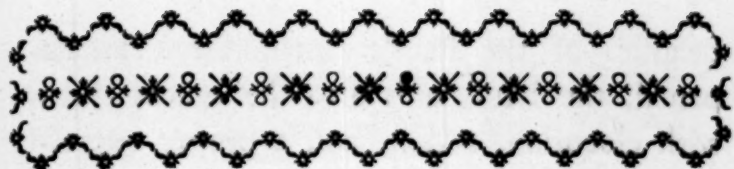
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beauties of the Poet's fancy, the Painter's pencil, the Musician's art; he graces them with elocution, action, and a proper expression, as well as impressions of the various passions necessary to the character he assumes. It is, I think, somewhere said by Aristotle, that "there are pictures as capable of reclaiming men, as precepts of moral philosophy:" the Player exhibits such pictures, and has this superiority over other artists, that he can vary his piece at pleasure, and be instructively pleasing in a variety of lights and attitudes; a perfection peculiar only to himself.

The Actor is the Poet's best means of conveying instructions to mankind: to answer this purpose capially, he should enjoy a large portion of the gifts of Nature; viz. a penetrating wit, a clear understanding, and a good memory; with an articulate voice, ready utterance, a feeling heart, expressive countenance, a genteel figure, and a piercing eye, which, at one glance, can convey the inward motions of the soul to the observing beholder. These are qualifications which he must derive from nature; but to perfect them, he should have not only a taste of, but a competent skill in Poetry, Painting, Music,  
and

and Oratory, that he may be enabled judiciously to select whatever is graceful in each, and transfuse it into his performance; for "there is an affinity between all arts, and they are mutually assistant to each other \*." To his polite taste in the arts, he should also add a knowledge of the leading manners and languages of nations, whether antient or modern; because the Drama at different times embraces them all, from the Arctic to the Antarctic Pole; and if a new character falls in his way, with the forming which he is unacquainted, he ought to apply to history for illustration; because his failing to imitate properly the manners and deportment of that nation wherein the Poet has laid his scene, or forgetting the quality of the character he represents, must expose him to the disgust of his auditors. "That the orator who moves most, is he that is most moved," is an observation of Quintilian's, which may, with equal propriety, be applied to the Actor; for unless he himself be affected with what he says and does, he cannot hope to inspire the beholders with sympathetic feelings, or indeed with any passion but that of contempt: nay, though

\* CICERO.

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he fully possesses every other requisite accomplishment, if he wants this one, which is also the gift of Nature, a gift by no means in the power of Art to bestow, he must not expect to succeed on the Stage; for feeling is as it were the first great spring upon which all the other mechanic motions depend.

*'Tis not sufficient to repeat a part ;  
With proper accent it must reach the heart :  
The Actor to the audience must reveal ;  
He has the will and faculty to feel :  
Mov'd in himself, all others he controuls,  
Commands their thoughts, and agitates their souls.*

AARON HILL.

This feeling or sensibility which I am recommending, must therefore have a large share in his composition; and some particular characters also require him to be exquisitely benevolent and humane. There are many characters in which he will pall and be quite insipid, if those virtues are not in his nature; for how can he give propriety to that of which he has no idea? A good understanding will always take nature, as a guide, conscious that her's is the language of the heart, which all feel, though so few can express; those who  
can,

can, are by so doing sure of pleasing beyond the simple power of the most eloquent Orator : for the Actor penetrates the heart, while the Orator's tones die away upon the ear.

The mind may be compared to a musical instrument, which sympathizes with all that is just, harmonious, and beautiful, in the outward creation : thus it is delighted with the harmony of colours and sounds, through the medium of the eye and ear. Thus where the Poet has painted the manners and passions of mankind with a beautiful and just propriety, we are ravished with the ideal excellencies of his creation : but how is that rapture heightened, when the judicious Actor, hitting the same notes and accents of passion, realizes them to the eye and ear ; impresses them on the understanding by passionate looks, pleasing voice, and unaffected action ?

To be possessed of every essential requisite of a good Actor, is but the happy portion of a few : if we examine the History of the British Stage, we shall find that England has not produced above ten capital Actors for these last fifty years ; for Acting is a science in which



few succeed, though many attempt it. Several have been either still-born, or miscarried even in their first essay : few have attained even a mediocrity of merit, and few indeed, very few, have reached excellency ; so very difficult is this science ; such a fund does it require of natural and acquired abilities.

All are convinced that a universal genius is as rarely to be met with as a Shakespear in Poetry, or that best displayer of his beauties Mr. Garrick. The great diversity of characters in the Drama, require a suitable aptitude of genius and disposition for their happy execution. A man may be a most excellent Mathematician, and not a Newton ; a fine Poet, and not a Shakespear ; a good Actor, and not a Garrick. He only can be said to be most perfect in this art, who can execute it with ease, and to whom the transition is natural ; for in Acting, some may excel in Comedy, some in Tragedy ; as in Painting, some are better in still-life than in action ; in Philosophy, some Logic, others in Metaphysics.

This will be most clearly illustrated, if we look abroad into the world, and observe that  
Providence

Providence has allotted to each man a distinct genius and propensity to one particular study or employment more than to another. There is also a certain peculiar cast of humour and leading passion more strongly predominant in one than another. The general designs of Providence are thus promoted by the different humours and pursuits of individuals.

Again: Art is divided and subdivided into a multitude of lesser branches: more sublime geniusses soar to the nobler parts of it, inferior ones reach the meaner; yet all are excellent and useful in their kind and station, and each will certainly display a greater accuracy, polish, and perfection, by applying his genius to that part only Nature has apparently allotted for him.

This diversity of genius is wisely contrived to make the union of society more firm and lasting, and that we might be more generally useful to each other.

Hence it will follow, that, as there is the utmost variety of characters in the theatric, all which are supposed to be copies of the real

world, so also it is requisite that an Actor should possess the correspondent parts. Personal and mental manners should be strictly attended to, that he may reduce the part he assumes to our ideas of reality; and by carefully consulting the natural extent and propensity of his own particular genius, secure a just applause in low characters, rather than forfeit all by ambitiously grasping at what is out of the limits of his abilities.

The justness of this remark is obvious; and if it was more particularly attended to on the Stage, it might then be called a copy of the great world with much more propriety, and many of its defects would be much sooner remedied. It is the same in other arts: Raphael excelled in design, yet was not so happy in colouring as Titian; Kneller's excellency lay in Portraits, but he was not so happy in Landscips or Still-life. It is seldom we meet with a Musician who can perform equally well on all instruments: the most celebrated masters have confined their practice to a single species of their respective science; and how rare, if any, are the instances we meet with on the Stage, of those who have this Protæan excellency of  
varying

varying their character to every thing at pleasure.

Here it may be proper to remark how wide the difference is between the man of real genius, and him whose entire merit depends on the acquisitions of art: the one is never satisfied with the prescriptions of others, but is perpetually exploring new paths to perfection; while the other, wanting ideas of his own, must derive them from the man of genius, and dares not presume to tread out of the old beaten track of example. An Actor, who derives his excellency from nature, will always perform with spirit and ease what his most laborious imitators can do but painfully, and consequently indifferently. It has been a frequent complaint, that many Actors, at their first setting out, endeavour to imitate the particular manner of excellent performers in the parts they most excel in; but for want of equal abilities or discernment, they fall short of the striking grace and beauty of their original, and convert the minute defects and common slips of humanity into the most glaring absurdities. This is as much a proof of their vanity as of their want of merit. Thus, in  
Painting



Painting and Poetry, the best copiers of Raphael, Rubens, Angelo, &c. discover a hard and laboured stiffness in their pieces, which demonstrates their inferiority; and the highest colouring of stile in Spencer, Shakespeare, and Milton's imitators, falls infinitely short of their original. The reason is obvious; that which was the genuine effect of nature and unlimited genius in one, is only a mean imitation in the other; for though a justness of proportion and similarity of stile may possibly be preserved, yet still the freedom and grace peculiar to an original is wanting.

But where this rare genius appears, whose rich donations from nature are afterwards matured by study and practice, his merit will not only be intitled to, but command a general applause from the public; and which is yet more, it will compel from every one that heart-felt, calm approbation of the judicious, which is always paid to such uncommon excellence.



## C H A P. II.

*How an Actor ought to form himself; the means by which he may arrive at excellence.*

AS the diamond, however intrinsically valuable, requires the utmost skill and labour of the artist to unveil its lustre to the curious eye; so neither does genius form a complete Actor, nor yet can the character be attained without one: 'tis study and practice must improve that genius to such an accuracy and perfection as will stand the examination of the most judicious critic and impartial judge.

His first care will be to study his subject and character universally, and enter into all the spirit and variety which it admits of and requires: but it is not enough that he should study and understand his own part perfectly well; he must also be intimately acquainted with all the correspondent characters, else he cannot do justice to the part he assumes. Neither is it enough that he should be absolutely perfect in it: a good memory is one of the smallest, though most necessary of his qualifications; and to fail in this particular, shews

shews the greatest weakness and negligence, and is one of the highest affronts that can be offered to his audience.

To do justice to his character, he must not only strongly impress it on his own mind, but make a temporary renunciation of himself and all his connections in common life, and for a few hours consign all his private joys and griefs to oblivion; forget, if possible, his own identity. How difficult, and yet how requisite the task! He must put on the character with the habit, and assume the air, look, language, and action of the person he represents, till his imagination, quite absorpt in the extensive idea, influences his whole frame; is visible in every glance of the eye, every air of his countenance. Thus all his powers will sometimes swell with the most violent transports of rage, and again dissolve away by an insensible gradation into the most placid calm and serenity. This is not so much acting as being an original; and the Actor who has attained this has reached the summit of his art.

The objects of his study are the various passions and manners of mankind. "Nature,"

as

as Cicero observes, “ has assigned to each passion and sentiment its peculiar air of countenance and gesture.” He will be particularly careful in marking all their different appearances, as they are legible in the countenance. Thus, when rage inflames the mind, the eye kindles, and the whole frame is agitated; where joy and satisfaction reign, a delightful calm and serenity brightens in the countenance; but how languid and depressed is it labouring under grief and disappointment; and what a scouling malignity glances in the eye, where envy and jealousy predominate!

All these and many more he can learn in the book of Nature, which constantly lies open for his study and perusal. Art and learning offer him all the help in their power; precept and example are ever before him; and he must want either genius or application, or both, if he does not excel in some degree.

When he understands these different appearances thoroughly, he will also carefully note their different changes and transitions from one to another. This requires the utmost pains and discernment, and not many



hitherto have attained it. If he has strong ideas, and only watches the daily occurrences of life, he may, on many occasions, carry off a favourite look, passion, or attitude, and insert them in the character he would represent, in the same manner as the inimitable Hogarth can occasionally take the out-lines of a face fit for his purpose in his pocket-book. We have a droll example of this in Congreve: when he was about writing his Comedy of Love for Love, he lodged in disguise for three weeks among the sailors at Wapping, that, by a closer observation of their manners, he might enliven his character of Ben. Something not unlike this we are told of Sir Richard Steele, who, to learn the characters of low-life, gave a general feast to the beggars of Edinburgh; and observed, when it was over, that he had laid in a fund of low humour sufficient for a Comedy. And Lord Orrery remarks of Dr. Swift, that he delighted in scenes of low life; and, in his journies to England, chose to converse with waggoners, ostlers, &c. Le Brun would not have been so successful in the delineation of the passions, had it not been his common practice to observe the workings of passion, even in a common quarrel in the street.

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The Actor, as well as the Poet and Painter, will converse with Nature in every dress. Jobson on the Stage may sometimes converse with a real cobbler, if it was only to learn the use of the stirrup and pincers : even Apelles submitted to the correction of a connoisseur in this science ; for, though he might be able to give a general idea of his figure, yet, with all its excellence, it was not to be supposed he could express, with sufficient precision, all those little particularities which are inclusive in his art.

History and Historical Paintings will be the next branch of his study. These can furnish him with the general character, description, and dress of the hero or personage he is to represent, and the manners of the age, &c. from all which he may judiciously select some circumstantial likeness or particularity allusive to the known story, which will give a greater air of probability and truth to his performance.

Thus, if he confines his studies to Nature in general, and to the passions and manners of mankind in particular, he will be always certain of preserving a close likeness, and never run the hazard of straining himself beyond probability

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probability and truth, which may justly be termed Painting beyond the Life; nor run into those unnatural fallies which will evermore render him offensive to his audience, who cannot fail of despising him for those unmeaning rants, which they never can find to correspond with their own feelings.

The advantages he will have in studying Nature alone are self-evident; hereby he will have an opportunity of introducing more natural and lively touches, than he whose opposite poverty of genius deviates from proportion and truth; and I need not add, that it is far more noble to strike out a new original beauty of our own, than to be the closest copier of any other, however excellent in his way; because at best he is only a Painter, who copies from the same original.



CHAP.

## C H A P. III.

*How he ought to deport himself with regard to the world, his masters, his brethren, and his choice of characters.*

WHEN the Player has discovered where the strength of his genius lies, and applies himself to that set of characters which are conformable to it; when also he has laid in a sufficient stock of reading and observation, he may be then said to be only properly prepared for his business; a long and arduous practice afterwards being necessary to reduce his natural and acquired abilities into perfection, and to ripen them for execution.

I would recommend it, in the first place, as a useful piece of prudence to the young Actor, when he enters on the Stage, to restrain his ambition by a modest diffidence, and set out in those characters which he can perform with ease and freedom, that he may rise in the approbation and esteem of his audience by unfolding his excellencies by degrees; for thus will he secure his present and future reputation.

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It



It is the misfortune of young performers sometimes to attempt capital characters wherein great Players only have succeeded, and even those by a long and severe application; these, though they perform with a tolerable mediocrity, yet permit of a comparison being made greatly to their disadvantage from the apparent inferiority they discover; and they are thereby prevented and discouraged from all future progress. It is usual for them to perform such parts for their own benefits; and though at other times they would not be endured in them, they think, as the audience are their friends, they must bear with their infirmities. Painful task! But when they are habituated a while to the Stage, and got rid of that awkward stiffness and uneasy timidity, which all experience more or less at first, and which is as painful to the audience as themselves, they may then, with greater confidence of success, rise by degrees to all the grand characters their talents are adapted to; and not risk their future fame, by making an indifferent appearance in a capital character for once, and ever after to appear in a mean and inconsiderable light.

Let

Let it be observed further, that the excellence of parts does not consist in their length, though it is the misfortune of many performers to think they do; and so they have a great deal to repeat, they do not care what it is, or how they do it. Epictetus has very judiciously observed, that "it is not to be considered among the Actors who is Prince or who is Beggar, but who act Prince or Beggar best." Many instances might be brought where some of the most capital performers have shewn uncommon excellence even in the shortest characters: those who have seen Mr. Garrick in the Sick King in Henry the Fourth, Lusignan in Zara, &c. will be convinced of the truth of this. Dogget, one of the best Comedians of his time, used to perform one of the Witches in Macbeth, and Tom Thimble in the Rehearsal, when in the very zenith of his reputation. Norris was so excellent in Dicky in the Constant Couple, that he was ever after called Jubilee Dicky: in the year 1711, when the Rehearsal was performed at Drury-Lane, we find his name in the cast of that Play for the part of Hey, ho! where there are not above two lines; and I have been told by a gentleman who remembers

to have seen him in that part, that he always received vast applause. Powell, who was a most excellent Actor, and noted for his performance of Lear, Œdipus, &c. performed Prince Prettyman; Booth played Aquilius in Mithridates, and Clermont in the Double Gallant; Colley Cibber stuck to the Chaplain in the Orphan, the Mad Englishman in the Pilgrim, and Gibbet in the Stratagem, which characters are now given to performers of the lowest class. We have seen Woodward, in his highest favour with the town, play a Soldier bringing a message in the Rehearsal, and Theophilus Cibber the Gentleman-usher in Lear.

It will always give additional pleasure to the public, when performers of such established reputation thus descend from themselves on some occasions, and bring a few of these inferior characters into repute by their performance, as they are generally passed over now without much notice; so much attention is paid to one or two leading characters in a Play: or if performers of smaller abilities would attach themselves to such only, and seek to rise no higher than their talents will permit, then

then we should be certain of seeing truth and nature more exactly copied upon the Theatre.

However capricious or fantastic some are pleased to think of the public taste, yet true merit will always beget itself admirers, and the smallest degree of it will meet with its due portion of applause; though all are not judges alike, yet what springs from truth and nature will be universally pleasing. But it is the misfortune of some who are too incorrigibly vain, to be above submitting to a reproof or admonition; to hug themselves in their insufficiency, and censure that audience for a depravity of taste, which has overlooked those perfections they never possessed, except in their own mind. There is a gentleman of this kind in one of our Theatres, who, when he was rewarded some time ago with the public contempt, on his coming off the Stage, comforted himself with this reflection; "that he could not condemn himself for his performance, as his audience had no real taste to distinguish the merit of it."

The Actor who means to excel, must be possessed of an invincible diligence and application to bring his excellencies into full view:



he must also have a mind ever open to conviction and improvement; nor should he be so opinionated of his judgment as not sometimes to admit the corrections of a candid friend, whom he knows to be skilled in the graces of his profession. Hortensius was viewed in this light by Roscius and by Æsopus. These great Actors constantly attended his pleadings, that they might copy upon the Stage as many of the graces of his action and elocution as were compatible with their different characters. The like is observed of Cicero, who constantly acquired new improvements from the observations and correction of his intimate friend Roscius. Demosthenes, though he met with such ill success at his first setting out as an orator, yet, by invincible application, became the admiration of his age, for the life and energy of his action, and the unaffected dignity of his eloquence. Nature was unkind to him in a voice, and he was unskilled in action; and the ill success of his first public attempt would have discouraged a man of less resolution from any future one; but he persevered, and was successful. It is said of him, that he regulated his action before a mirror, and his utterance by the remarks  
of

of that Player who was witness to the ill success of his first oration. Though I do not very much admire the first of these expedients, yet it serves to shew the industry of the Orator, and is a useful hint to the Actor to embrace every assistance and opportunity in his power. An example of the like kind might be produced from one of the greatest ornaments of the Theatre in the last age, who, on his first entrance on the Stage, laid it down as an invariable rule to study six hours a day for three years, besides discharging the usual business of the Theatre. This resolution he has been often heard to say, he kept without the least intermission; and the consequence was, his becoming one of the most capital Actors of his time: for it is a certain truth, that diligence and application will not only improve a real genius into absolute perfection, but also brightens the most imperfect natural abilities into some degree of excellence.

Where a man has genius, if he is endowed with industry sufficient to improve it, it will shine out with admired lustre, even in spite of natural defects. The genius of Demosthenes led him to the practice of oratory; an art in

which, before he could excel, he had three impediments to triumph over. The first was a thickness and hurry in speech, which he cured by speaking with a pebble in his mouth; the second a shortness of breath, which he conquered by clambering daily up a steep hill; and the third was a weak shrill voice, which he strengthened by declaiming upon the rocks near the sea-side, where the waters roared round him like heaven's thunder. I have seen an Actor whose talents were fine, with a figure rather mean than commendatory, step the Stage with real majesty, support dignity, and infuse awe, while another whose person was tall, and finely formed, has rather looked like a peasant than a prince: he has poked his head forward, as if he had a mind to dart it into the lady's face to whom he was supposed to make love; his figure has been ungainly, his motions awkward, and his whole deportment rather like Prim Stiff, the mercer on Ludgate-Hill, than Hamlet the Dane, or the Wild Harry who shook the throne of France, and gave universal formidability to the name of Britain.



## C H A P. IV.

*Of Passion and Elocution: how to manage and preserve the Voice: Aaron Hill on this subject.*

A Poet, in the enthusiasm of his writing, very rarely thinks of the particular tone of Voice and mode of Action belonging to each speech of his character: he thinks it sufficient if he animates it with a proper infusion of Passion and strength of sentiment, or to enliven it with wit and humour; and leaves it to the judgment and taste of the Actor, to give his conceptions their full force by a suitable conformity of each. Now there are some passages where the passions are so plainly pointed out, that he must have a very dull genius indeed who cannot at first sight discern where the propriety ought to lie. For instance, take a few of the following speeches:

In the fourth Scene of the first Act of Henry the Sixth, Part II. where Duke Humphry and his wife are discoursing, she begins thus:

*Why droops my lord, like over-ripened corn  
Hanging the head with Ceres' plenteous load?*



*Why doth the great Duke Humpbry knit his brows,  
As frowning at the favours of the world!  
Why are thine eyes fixt to the sullen earth,  
Gazing at that which seems to dim thy sight?  
What seest thou there? - - - -*

And in Othello, where Desdemona says to him,

*Alas! why gnaw you so your nether lip?  
Some bloody passion shakes your very frame.*

And Lenox in Macbeth,

*What haste looks thro' his eyes!  
So should he look that seems to speak things strange.*

Many other instances might be given; but these are sufficient to shew where the Action, &c. are implied and pointed out in the very description.

One of the most beautiful figures in Poetry, is where the verse paints the very thing it describes: but what avails the Poet's excellency in this particular, if the Actor, for want of a just discernment, or from an insipid languor of spirit, loses one of his chief beauties, and cannot make the sound of his voice an echo to the Poet's sense?

Now,

Now, in comic characters the tone of voice, and action proper to each, is visible almost at first sight; and this may be the reason why more succeed in comic than tragic characters: for as all men are not born heroes, so all are not born Tragedians; nor have that dignity of soul, or tenderness of affection, which is so essential to a tragic hero; but all are naturally judges of humour in some shape, and can much sooner discern an impropriety in one than in the other.

Formerly a turgid vociferation or effeminate whine, accompanied with the most outrageous and unnatural rants, were mistaken for the best display of the heroic and tender passions; but as the established maxim of our modern Stage is always to keep Nature in view, a great part of this vicious action and utterance has been deservedly exploded; and I believe that, for this reason, Acting is in far greater perfection than ever it was in the days of our forefathers. As Shakespeare's writings are the very language of Nature, it is probable, that, while he continued an Actor, he suited his voice and action to it; and as we know he did not care to have "a passion torn  
to

to tatters," by this madness of gesture and voice, we may justly infer, that his judicious regulation of both was not relished by the vitiated taste of the audience of his days, and that he was censured as a bad Actor undeservedly \*.

It has been the opinion of an eminent writer, "that if a Player enters thoroughly into the nature and circumstances of his part, a proper action will necessarily follow;" but, if this assertion be true, there will then be no necessity of study or previous preparation, and genius, unassisted by art, is alone sufficient; but, in the mean time, where shall we fix the standard of genius and perfection, since judg-

\* That this was the taste very lately, appears in the following extract of a letter from Mr. Wilkes to Aaron Hill, Esq; dated February 25, 1730.

— "It were to be wished, that every spectator had your penetration, and could so justly distinguish the different passions, and the manner of working them: no Actor, then, could hope for a favourable reception, but from his endeavours, upon all occasions, to copy Nature. But, alas! the taste in general is so depraved, that there is little or no applause to be gained in Tragedy, but at the expence of lungs."

*See a Collection of Letters written by A. Pope, Esq; and others, to Mr. Hill.*

ment

ment and taste are so various? It is certain, as was before observed, that every passion and sentiment has a proper air and appearance, both of countenance and action, stamped upon it by Nature, whereby it is easily known and distinguished; every representation which comes short of, or exceeds it, is a departure from it. This every Actor ought to be strictly acquainted with, else he may affix the most unnatural grimace and gesture to the most striking passages, and yet call it natural and just acting. I have met with many who were able to enter into all the spirit and fire of a character in idea, and yet, for want of sufficient knowledge and experience in the Drama, were never able to bring that idea into execution, because he wanted judgment to adjust both his voice and his action; mistaking rant for energy, and beating the air instead of keeping up a proper deportment.

The antients were no less critical in preserving the dignity and decorum of the Stage in the various inflections of the voice, than in the action, since both were regulated by Music; and if an Actor either stood out of order or spoke a false quantity, he was most certainly  
hissed



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hissed off the Stage : therefore, that the Actor should have a musical genius is undeniable, that he may be as able to catch the voice of passion as the look and action of it.

There is a natural melody in the voices of some, which prejudices us in their favour, and immediately charms us into attention ; for the ear is the agent of the understanding as well as the eye ; and as it is the variety of sounds makes harmony in Music, and of colours in Painting, so the beautiful variation of the Actor's voice with his subject, is one of his chief excellencies.

I take it for granted, that his voice should be clear, articulate, penetrating, and intelligible to the most distant person in a Theatre, and yet, at the same time, to be void of all overstraining or vehemence, and appear the genuine production of ease and freedom ; a voice, overstrained in discourse, is as discordant to the ear, as harsh notes in Music. A proper skill and attention to the rules of pronunciation and cadence, and to the proper rests and pauses of every discourse, will meliorate and smooth all that discordancy and harshness

harshness which he derives from defective nature : but if, after all, his voice is neither strong nor sufficiently articulate, in vain has he fire, freedom, and ease, if he does not or cannot adapt it, as well as his genius, to his part ; all his fine action will then degenerate into ridiculous Pantomime.

Tragedy and Comedy seem to require quite different tones for their proper execution ; sorrow, grief, pain, &c. require a voice slow, solemn and affecting, like the melancholy plaintive notes of an Adagio ; Joy and Pleasure, which are the proper appendages and marks of Comedy, will naturally form the voice into the Spirituoso, or chearful vivacity of Music ; Love in general requires a soft, alluring, and melodious voice ; the mellow warblings of a German flute have a finer effect in moving the tender passions, than the rougher tones of a bassoon ; and certainly an Actor, with an articulate melodious voice, is more proper for love-scenes, than he whose voice has all the roughness of a base-viol.

Hatred, rage, and contempt, may be compared to the sharps in Music, as joy, triumph,  
and

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and exultation, are best expressed by the martial sounds of a trumpet.

Hence it is evident, that a Player requires as fine an ear as a Musician, to judge of the harmony and propriety of the Poet's numbers, and, I am of opinion, that Mrs. Cibber's skill in Music contributes not a little to her excellency and success in Tragedy.

The foregoing observations may be summed up in a few general rules, drawn from those great masters of antient oratory, Quintilian and Cicero.

The voice of Joy should be full, pleasant and flowing; of Love, gay, soft, or alluring; of Anger or Hatred, vehement, sharp, and severe, intermixed with frequent respirations; in insinuations, confession, and acknowledgment, gentle and temperate; in persuasion, admiration, promise or consultation, grave and majestic; in fear, bashfulness, and modesty, abject, meek, and contracted, tremulous and hesitating; in pity and compassion, it has a soothing and melancholy plaintiveness; grief and trouble require a sad, dull, and languishing

ing voice, grave and opprest, interrupted with heaving sighs and flowing tears; in confidence, it is loud and strong, supported with a decent boldness and daring constancy.

Finally, as an instrument, when touched lightly and gently by a masterly hand, gives a soft and tender sound; but, if with strength and boldness, an energetic commanding tone; so in speaking, if the passion is violent, it will produce a strong and rapid pronunciation; and when it subsides into a calm, serene sentiment, such will, or ought, the delivery to be.





## C H A P. V.

*Of the various Passions ; how to express them in Speaking, Looks, and Action : illustrated by comparing Iago with Zanga, &c.*

**T**HERE is a something inexpressibly eloquent in a proper and just action, which words can never describe : it is the language spoken by the soul, which penetrates directly to the heart, and that undisguised natural eloquence which only is universally intelligible.

The beauty of all action consists in its ease and freedom ; that is, in making it appear to be the natural consequence of that passion, humour, or sentiment, with which the Actor is supposed to be animated at that juncture ; so that, if with the propriety of voice, (as recommended in the last chapter) his action does not also strictly correspond, his performance will be incomplete ; for an erroneous action will contradict and confuse the justest speaking ; and the mind is quickly disgusted at the incongruous association. It is the Actor's business

business and duty then to observe, with the utmost accuracy he is capable of, not only all the different tones and modulations of voice, but also all the variety of action and attitude, which are proper to the highest degree of eloquence displayed in public, as well as to the most familiar conversation, or even retired soliloquy in private life; all which, though invariably dictated by Nature, yet may be further regulated and improved by Art. It may also be observed, that every station of life has a different propriety of voice and action peculiar to it; and though the passion, &c. may be the same in all, yet the expression and action denotive of that passion must vary according to age, station, and circumstance, or as the person represented would be supposed to act in real life. Thus Anger, Repentment, Love, &c. appear very differently in the prince and the peasant; and the disengaged air and gaiety of the man of quality ought never to be intermixed with the awkward mirth and clumsy postures of the clown. "The joy of a monarch, says Dryden, for the news of a victory, must not be expressed like the extasy of a Harlequin on receipt of a letter from his mistress."

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But to come to particulars : As the knowledge of the passions in general, and of the action, attitude, and tone of voice, which each species of character requires, is the most essential branch of the Actor's profession, and requires the greatest display of genius, I shall here attempt a general descriptive outline of those passions which most frequently occur ; first premising, that the few writers who have treated upon this subject have done it so variously, and are so divided in their opinions, it is scarcely possible to handle it with that precision which might be expected. I shall therefore only mention those which derive such distinguishable marks from Nature as cannot easily be mistaken, as well as I have been able to collect them from the several authors who have wrote on this subject, intermixing my own observations.

Desire and Aversion are the two leading principles of the soul, from whence all its other motions or passions spring.

The novelty, grandeur, and beauty of any object, either in Nature or Art ; the properties which it is really, or which we even imagine

gine it to be possessed of, will excite our admiration, respect, esteem or veneration, love, and desire : its presence or possession will dispose us to tranquility, joy, and exultation ; as, on the contrary, its absence, distance, or removal into the possession of another, will excite grief, sorrow, fear, envy or jealousy, and despair.

The obstacles which oppose the enjoyment of our wishes, will, according to their nature, inspire us either with anger, courage, and resolution, or contempt and hatred.

If this object of our desire is attainable, it will raise our hope, desire, and expectation ; if removed too far out of our reach, our envy and jealousy are inflamed ; and if it is absolutely lost to us, despondency, rage, and despair, will ensue.

This is a general description of the operations of these leading principles that act upon our minds : the appearance and dress they put on to our eye, shall be described in the order wherein they have been already named.



Simple admiration occasions no very remarkable alteration in the countenance; the eye fixes upon the object; the right-hand naturally extends itself with the palm turned outwards; and the left-hand will share in the action, though so as scarcely to be perceived, not venturing far from the body; but when this surprise reaches the superlative degree, which I take to be astonishment, the whole body is actuated: it is thrown back, with one leg set before the other, both hands elevated, the eyes larger than usual, the brows drawn up, and the mouth not quite shut. Dryden somewhere paints this passion well by the following lines:

*The pale assistants on each other star'd,  
With gaping mouths for issuing words prepar'd;  
The still-born sounds upon the palate hung,  
And dy'd imperfect on the faultring tongue.*

Respect and submission may be expressed by the eyes mildly beholding the personage that enforces it, the body bent, and the hands either hanging down not close to the body, the fingers closed, and the palms turned outward; or else by the eye cast down, and one hand laid to the breast.

Love,

Love, which is allied to respect, at first requires a tranquil aspect; the eyes naturally are drawn upon the object, and the countenance speaks satisfaction.

But when the passion ripens in the heart, it does not rest in simple complacency and respect; it is of a more assimilating and attractive nature; it swells all the powers with the most eager impetuosity of desire. Though the ancients omitted this passion in their theatrical pieces, probably thinking it a derogation from that severe virtue they valued themselves on, yet the success it has had under the forming hands of the greatest masters of our Drama, and the great variety of characters and incidents it furnishes, will sufficiently authorize its being preserved on our Stage. And I believe many will think with me, that if a play was brought on wherein it had no share, it would prove but a cold and insipid entertainment to most of our modern audiences. Characters of the love kind are expected from every theatrical piece; as this prevailing passion and sensibility are what all have felt the effects of in some time or other of their lives; and audiences of the least taste are judges of it, and

can easily distinguish its counterfeit from its real appearance,

This passion discovers itself in an endless variety of appearances, according to age, station, and circumstance, and as it is influenced by or mingled with any other passion: the other passions have some general outlines, whereby they are easily known and distinguished; here then the Player will discover the penetrating subtilty of his genius in tracing out those appearances as they variously occur.

Thus we see the sudden starts and breakings out of it in all the gloomy jealousy of Othello. Love was his prevailing passion, jealousy his prevailing foible; and the former takes all its tincture and hue from the latter, even when his passion is wrought up to the most interesting pitch, as in this speech.

----- I'll smell thee on the tree;  
*Oh balmy breath, that do'st almost persuade  
 Justice to break her sword!--One more, one more;  
 Be thus when thou art dead, and I will kill thee,  
 And love thee after---One more, that's the last;  
 So sweet, was ne'er so fatal! I must weep,  
 But they are cruel tears: this sorrow's heav'nly;  
 It strikes where it doth love.*





delightful tears : thus I am certain, that the nice touches of nature in the discovery between Sealand and Indiana administer a delight far superior to the common flashes of joy and mirth felt on ordinary occasions.

Grief and sorrow are the reverse of the passion last described ; the blackness and melancholy that reigns in the soul is painted in the gloom and dejection of the countenance ; as the spirits retire to support the inward burthen, they leave it wan, and the eyes become heavy and closed, the head is carelessly declined, and an affecting solemnity is observable in the whole deportment. This is the plain simple appearance of sorrow, such as Almeria's in the first scene of the Mourning Bride, where she says,

----- O force of constant woe !  
*'Tis not in harmony to calm my griefs.*

But when the calamity rises higher, the accents are broken and interrupted with sighs and groans, a haggard wildness, the very enthusiasm of grief, is seen in the looks, which swallows up our common sorrow as the ocean does the little streams.

What

What is most striking of all is the silent pause of sorrow, where our griefs are too great for utterance. The

*Vox faucibus hæsit.*

Or, as Shakespeare describes it,

----- *My grief lies all within,  
And those external manners of laments  
Are merely shadows of the unseen grief  
That swell with silence all my tortured soul.  
There lies the substance.*

“ Such silences (says an ingenious author \*, speaking of Niobe’s fitting disconsolate three days together on the tomb of her children, covered with a veil) have something more affecting and more strongly expressive of passion than the most artful speeches ; and in Sophocles, where the unfortunate Deianira discovers her mistake in having sent a poisoned vestment to her husband Hercules, her surprize and sorrow are unspeakable ; and she answers not her son who acquaints her with the disaster, but goes off the stage without uttering a syllable. A writer unacquainted with Nature and the Heart would have put into her mouth twenty

\* The Adventurer, Numb. 51.

florid iambics, in which she would have bewailed her misfortunes, and informed the spectators that she was going to die.

Take a shorter instance of the like kind from Shakespeare, who, to make the transition from peace of mind to despair more striking, introduces Romeo in the last act of *Romeo and Juliet* as in a settled tranquil state, in full expectation of good news from his dear mistress.

*If I may trust, the flattery of sleep,  
My dreams presage some joyful news at hand :  
My bosom's lord sits lightly on his throne,  
And all this day an unaccustomed spirit  
Lifts me above the ground with chearful  
thoughts, &c.*

Here a messenger brings him the news of Juliet's death. The account at first deprives him of the power of speaking; the anguish it creates works inward; grief, despair, and astonishment are displayed in his countenance. At length he takes breath with this one line :

*Is it even so ? then I defy you, stars !*

In which there is more real anguish implied than in twenty studied pages; and all who  
have

have seen that solemn pause of woe which Mr. Garrick shews in this particular, will allow that he does the poet inimitable justice.

The apprehension of an approaching evil, or of being deprived of our happiness in any shape, creates fear : its symptoms are a pale countenance, a troubled eye, a depression of the spirits approaching to fainting : when it rises to terror or horror, a tremor and universal agony follow ; the speech is broken and confused, and the half formed accents die upon the lips.

In the second part of Henry IV. Northumberland thus addresses the messenger of his son's death :

*Thou tremblest, and the whiteness in thy cheek  
Is apter than thy tongue to tell thy errand.  
Even such a Man, so faint, so spiritless,  
So dull, so dead in look, so woe-be-gone,  
Drew Priam's curtains in the dead of night,  
And would have told him half his Troy was burn'd.  
But Priam found the fire ere he his tongue.*

And when Juliet retires to her chamber to take the potion, she anticipates the horrors of the situation



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situation she is just entering into with so much force, that we think all the dreadful figures her imagination raises visible.

*Alas ! alas ! is it not like that I  
So early waking, what with loathsome smells,  
And shrieks like mandrakes torn out of the earth,  
That living mortals bearing them run mad.---  
Or if I wake shall I not be distraught,  
(Invironed with all these hideous fears)  
And madly play with my fore-fathers joints,  
And pluck the mangled Tybalt from his shroud ?  
And in this rage with some great kinsman's bone,  
As with a club dash out my desp'rate brains ?*

Hope is the reverse of the last passion ; it gives a desirous eager look, with a mixture of fear and assurance : as the latter prevails, the countenance becomes more placid and serene, which is the most can be said of this passion, as its motions are chiefly internal, and create but small alteration in the countenance.

Jealousy and Envy proceed from various causes : the peace and prosperity of others ; the advantages they are possessed of, and which we think ourselves intitled to and qualified for,  
will

will give rise to Envy, Hatred, Rancor, Malice, and Revenge. These tormenting, detestable passions have much the same appearances. They cover the countenance with a malignant gloom, the eye is inflamed, and shoots cautious side-glances at the object of resentment: thus Milton represents Satan in Paradise viewing our first parents.

----- *Aside the devil turned*  
*For envy, yet with jealous leer malign*  
*Eyed them askance. -----*

There is a great deal of difference between the malice of a slave and the vengeance of a prince justly provoked; and while we abhor Iago, and view his fall with pleasure, we find something in the character of Zanga that commands our pity. Iago prosecutes to destruction a noble unsuspecting officer, for having preferred above him *one Michael Cassio*. He has no other real motive for his villainy: he indeed in the first scene of the Play mentions to Roderigo, that he hates the general on another account; for, says he, "He has, between my sheets, done me the unlawful office;" and again he declares he will not be easy, "till he

he is even with him wife for wife." But from his deportment through the rest of the play, he leaves us at liberty to judge, that he has invented this story, the better to help his designs on Roderigo, without whom it is impossible his schemes can work. He then proceeds to destroy an honest gallant soldier, an innocent beautiful woman, a well-beloved modest man, and a simple outwitted coxcomb. He completes a mean but barbarous revenge, excited by a very trifling disappointment; he levels every thing in his way, and spares neither age, sex, or condition. When his villainies are detected, he departs himself with all the gloomy malice of a slave. "What ye know, says he, ye know; seek no more of me, for from this hour I never will speak more." In few words, he has neither the spirit to triumph in his vengeance, nor the least spark of refined feeling for having destroyed characters so amiable as Desdemona and Othello. How very different are the motives and deportment of Zanga! how intimately acquainted was the poet who drew the character, with the manner both of his rank and country! While Zanga is pursuing his aim, we find him now and then deliberating; we  
find

find a remembrance of what he was contending with, designs that may not admit of an honourable interpretation. "Does this, says he, become a prince, &c." but then retiring again into himself, he views his present abject condition; he recollects the insults whereto it has made him subservient, the person that has occasioned them. These motives, joined to the natural melancholy he imbibes from his native air, determine him to proceed. At length his wishes being crowned with success, and having triumphed over Alonzo his conqueror, his insulter, by making him destroy his friend, murder his wife, and rendering him absolutely miserable, no more remains for him to do than to shew him, that the man whom he despised and abused was the person to whom he owed his misfortune. Having no more occasion for the appearance of flattery and sycophantism, he throws off all disguise, and is himself again. Having raised the hopes of Alonzo, by promising to shew him the author of all his sufferings, he collects the whole prince; he assumes the port, the majesty of a conqueror, in saying,

*Know then!--'twas I--*

K

Now



Now he is restored to sovereignty, his heart overflows with satisfaction; and he proceeds to mortify Alonzo, by exerting his superiority still farther, and shewing him by the steps he had taken to undo him, that if he could not conquer him by open force, he could subdue him by policy; and as this subduction gave him superiority, no matter by what means attained, nor of what nature, his desires were gratified. Then he tells him, in the following lines, the various causes in which he triumphs.

*Thy wife is guiltless, &c.*

Then to shew that he has acted with a justice becoming himself, he desires Alonzo to remember who the man is that can thus greatly punish.

*Look on me, who am I? you'll say the Moor.*

How noble, how princely is his conduct, when he sees Alonzo fallen; how beautiful, how finely put into his mouth is this sentiment:

*I war not with the dead.*

And in the end that mixture of benevolence with which the whole of his character has been  
tinc-

fractured breaking out in his pitying the fall of so great and so good a man; his being sorry that he was necessitated to work the overthrow of so much virtue, naturally recommends him to our compassion, and in a great measure compensates for his vices. I think, indeed, the Poet derogates from the dignity of the character in carrying him off as it were in despair; and that the last line

*--- To receive me hell blows all her fires.*

were better altered to a more settled and philosophic sentiment.

In considering the two characters of Iago and Zanga, which appear of a similar nature, I would recommend to the Actor to observe that Iago's revenge is the sheer malice of a villain, who has no consequence to support him; that in Zanga he should take care to infuse an air of dignity through the whole; to give his fawning on Alonzo such an air that they shall seem forced and affected; that his proceedings are against a man

*Whose native country has been laid in blood.*

This is a character in the last act, of which par-

ticularly an Actor may get reputation, if he views and reviews it before he attempts it.

Disappointment is expressed by desponding down-cast looks, a gloomy eye, and the hand striking the breast. Despair needs not a finer description than we find of it in Shakespeare.

*My conscience hath a thousand several tongues,  
And ev'ry tongue brings in a several tale,  
And ev'ry tale condemns me for a villain.  
Perjury, perjury, in highest degree,  
Murth'ber, murth'ber, stern murth'ber, in the dir'st  
degree,  
Throng to the bar, all crying, guilty, guilty!  
I shall despair : there is no creature loves me ;  
And if I die, no soul shall pity me.*

Anger runs through the mind like a devouring flame ; it choaks the voice, gives a savage wildness to the eye ; the eye-brow in this disposition is let down, it is contracted, and pursed into frowns. This passion will sometimes excite a trembling in the whole frame ; and when it swells into an extreme rage, all these motions will be yet more violent. Pope paints it thus from Homer.

*Black choler fill'd his breast, that boil'd with ire,  
And from his eye-balls flash'd the living fire.*

The voice of passion is strongly marked in Hotspur.

*He said, he would not ransom Mortimer,  
Forbad my tongue to speak of Mortimer !*

And of extreme rage in Othello.

*Villain, be sure thou prove my love a whore ;  
Be sure of it ; give me the ocular proof,  
Or by the worth of my eternal soul,  
Thou hadst better have been born a dog  
Than answer my waked wrath.*

Revenge will best be expressed by a black gloomy satisfaction in the looks, if successful ; and with the most violent paroxysms of rage and regret, when disappointed. Thus Chamont, when brought in disarmed, cries,

*Gape hell, and swallow me to quick damnation,  
If I forgive your house ; if I not live  
An everlasting plague to thee, Acasto,  
And all thy race.*

Courage and Resolution are known by a confirmed steady aspect, the eye lively and penetrating, the body erect, every motion firm, the voice steady and nervous. Thus Richard prepares for battle :



*A thousand hearts are swelling in my bosom;  
 Draw, archers, draw your arrows to the head,  
 Spur your proud horses hard, and ride in blood,  
 And thou, our warlike champion, thrice renown'd  
 St. George, inspire me with the rage of lions.  
 Upon 'em----charge----follow me.*

Objects unworthy of our anger and resentment will yet raise our contempt, or breed disgust. These sensations are shewn by a certain kind of dignified pride in the countenance; a frown fixed upon the eye-brow; the lips brought to a half smile of scorn; the face turned from the object; and the hand extended, as if to keep it from approaching. Thus ought Pierre to receive Jaffair's address, when he finds him unfaithful.

*What whining monk art thou? what holy cheat?  
 That wouldst encroach upon my credulous ears,  
 And canst thus vilely, &c.*

The dignified Pride, which disdains resentment to an inferior, should be seen in the attitude and expression of Hastings to Dumont.

*Avaunt, base groom!  
 At distance wait, and know thy office better.*

Where

Where disappointed Rage and Pride predominate, it will express itself in the look and language of Tamerlane thus :

----- *Away, my soul*  
*Disdains thy conference.*

These are the general marks and appearances of the Passions commonly introduced into our theatrical characters : many other modes and distinctions might have been pointed out ; but those not being so general, nor so frequent, will be best learned by studying the circumstances and objects which occasion them.

It should also be observed, that all these Passions are more or less distinguishable in the eye ; Joy, Love, and Grief, are seen in an animated or cloudy look ; sometimes we see them in a lively and fierce agitation, expressive of Pride, Anger, and the like ; again serenely glowing with Mildness and Benignity ; overspread with a gentle languor, they show the soul dissolved in Delight ; Sorrow flows thro' them in tears ; in a word, they wish, they promise, they threaten, and one single glance

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of this wonderful organ draws into light the most retired sentiment of the soul.

Again, let it be observed, that, though all these passions, under different appearances, belong alike to tragic and comic characters; yet in Tragedy they are more strongly and distinctly marked than in Comedy. The dignity of tragical characters requires more weight; yet as the many are not judges of this, capital errors are better concealed, as well as real beauties overlooked. The scenes of Comedy, being only copies from that sort of life wherewith we are all acquainted, require the same variety of passions, but in different or inferior degrees; their exertion is never so strong, nor do the occasions require it: but their transitions are endless; and 'tis this variety which constitutes the excellency of the comic Player as well as Poet: therefore an error is much sooner discovered here, though it is easier to be avoided. To give these various Passions and their transitions not only their proper force, but distinction, and to take an agreeable and close likeness of those light-flying touches of Nature, will be the strongest and most striking pictures an Actor can ex-

hibit in a comic way; and for that purpose, he must always keep Horace's rule in view,

\* *Respicere exemplar vitæ morumque jubebo  
Doctum imitatore[m] & vivas hinc ducere voces.*

What I understand by this distinction is, that the Player is not only to consult the proper bent of his own talents, but also carefully to mark the difference of the passions in every situation and circumstance; and that very seldom a Player can represent the same passion with equal truth and nature in Tragedy as in Comedy. The solemn majesty of the one cannot always be reconciled to, or exchanged at pleasure for the sprightly ease and freedom of the other. There is a spirited gaiety in most of our comic love-parts, and a wide difference between the love of Romeo and Manly, the jealousy of Othello and Mr. Strickland, one being heroic above the common level, the other familiar.

There is a property in our comic Drama, wherein we have the superiority over all our neighbours; and that is humour. The prin-

\* Keep Nature's great original in view,  
And thence the living images pursue.

Francis.  
ciples



ciples of liberty and freedom, which the excellency of our constitution has made natural to every man, have of course produced a greater variety and oddity of character than, I apprehend, any other nation can furnish. And this quality is what all aim at, or possess in some shape or other; but it is no easy task to the Actor to distinguish and diversify properly the witty, the ridiculous, or the humorous of every character.

When Love has a strong dash and tincture of folly in it, the ridicule rises more forcibly on an audience: of this kind are the characters of Sir Paul Pliant and Fondlewife; the ridiculous distress of each, on the suspicions of cuckoldom, are inexpressibly entertaining. Folly and simplicity of every other nature are no less pleasing. The simple stupid stare, and vacancy of countenance in Master Stephen, or the ridiculous timidity of a Fribble, are as picturesque as the sprightly gaiety of a Sir Harry Wildair, or the more manly passion of a Valentine.

The propriety of the humour in characters of this kind is very much supported by mute  
action,

action, or bye-play, as some term it. In vain does the Poet write, if the Actor has not this art of setting his sentiments in the fairest point of view: To give no other instance, how different are our conceptions of that scene in the Anatomist, where the supposed dead body is brought in, when we read it, to what it appears when played; 'tis true we read what the Doctor speaks, and can form an idea of the laying out his apparatus, but we lose one half of the mirth of that humorous scene, unless we can see the silent terror of old Girard, under the apprehensions of being immediately cut up, and lectured upon.

A few general observations from that great Master of action, elocution, and oratory, Quintilian, may illustrate the preceding observations.

“\* The gesture (he observes) has more meaning than the voice itself; our very head, our very nod, is expressive of our sentiments---Brute beasts, tho' void of motion, express anger, joy and love in their eyes; and Painting,

\* See Guthrie's Translation of this author.

tho' .

tho' motionless, affects sometimes more powerfully than words."

"The head is the principal object in action, and its natural position contributes very much to gracefulness. When it droops it gives an air of meanness, when upright of arrogance, lolling of negligence, stiff and motionless of rusticity and barbarity; it ought to conform its motions to the pronounciation, to agree with the gesture, and fall in with every action of the hand and body."

"The look ought to have the same direction as the gesture, except where we express abhorrence, dislike, and aversion; and then the eyes and hands have a counter-action."

"The eye-brows contracted express anger; cast down, sorrow; open, joy; they rise and fall to express assent or dissent."

"The eyelids and muscles of the cheeks may be subservient to the eyes, and the right management of the eye-brows is of great importance, because in some measure they form the look, and influence the whole forehead,  
by

by contracting, raising, or lowering it, and have very great force in action. The blood is put in motion by the sentiments of the mind, mantles over the bashful modest features, settles into a blush under dread or fear, disappears, vanishes and cools into paleness, and properly tempered produces a beautiful serenity."

"The neck ought not to be awry, but straight, though not stiff: it is ungraceful to extend or sink it too much. The former is attended with a painful squeaking weak pronunciation: when the chin sinks on the breast the voice is less distinct. The shoulders should be seldom shrugged or contracted; it gives the speaker a mean servile designing air, and is never done but in adulation, admiration, or fear.

To extend the arms in an easy posture with the hand open, as it is stretched forth, is extremely graceful, if the speech is to be flowing, or rapid; but if it is somewhat more gay, the whole person must be thrown out, and the freedom of the gesture rise with that of the stile.



All action wherein the hands are not concerned, is weak and limited; their expressions are as various as language; they speak of themselves, they demand, promise, call, threaten, implore, detest, fear, question, and deny. They express joy, sorrow, doubt, acknowledgment, repentance, moderation; they rouse up, prohibit and prove, admire and abash! All nations, all mankind understand their language.

The gesture ought to be more adapted to the sentiment than to the words; every part of an Orator ought to speak; and all the passions about us must languish and die, unless kept alive by the glow of his voice, look, and action." All which must be corresponsive with the passion he is then animated with. An injudicious play or distortion of the muscles, contrary to the passion or sentiment, is vague and despicable. It is the same as if the base or tenor of a concert should rush out into a Rhapsody of different Airs from the rest, and convert the whole entertainment to a confused chaos of sounds.---An Actor of this kind may always promise himself the contempt and ridicule of his audience, for departing from that  
just

just imitation of nature wherein the whole perfection of his art consists.

It is apprehended that the foregoing observations will be of some use to Actors, in pursuing this branch to perfection. Doubtless their own study and experience will suggest many others. As this art is so extensive, and admits of such variety of improvement, it cannot be expected that a complete system of rules should be immediately advanced; and these are only intended to be an useful hint, and assistant to his genius, but not to fetter or confine it.

Every man has something in his temper wherein he differs from others, to which his action will involuntarily accommodate itself; and every Actor will find, for that reason, some parts much easier to him than others. And as it is impossible to suppose, that all men can express the same passions alike, yet, nature being the Actor's constant guide, he cannot err, if, as the great master of the drama directs, he takes care to "suit the Action to the Word, the Word to the Action."

## C H A P. VI.

*Of Dress and its propriety.*

THE last thing to be mentioned for the accomplishment of an Actor, is a judicious propriety in his dress, and that it may be adapted with sufficient exactitude to the age, time, and circumstances of his character; this may be called the last colourings and finishings of his picture; and in this case, very much will depend on his knowledge of antient history and historical paintings; with the general customs and modes of dress which then prevailed; nor is he to be less knowing in those which at present are the taste and practice of modern nations in general, and of his own in particular. By this means he may introduce some striking particularity, which will very much improve and enliven his action, and greatly assist him in giving his illusive representation the stronger resemblance of reality. Nor can he find a better guide in this particular, than the dresses of all nations, described and drawn to the life in a quarto book, published by Jeffries, at the corner of St. Martin's lane, in the Strand.

The

The Romans were so nicely careful in this point, that, as Mr. Kennet informs us, their Actors were always habited according to the fashion of the country where their scene was laid. This was strictly right; but notwithstanding, I don't know whether an attempt to introduce such a practice on our Theatre, would be so well received by audiences who have been so long habituated to such glaring impropriety and negligence in the opposite extreme.

But this we may however assert, that if a greater attention was bestowed on this subject, and the noted personages were dressed according to nature, and what we learn of them from their histories or pictures yet existing, it would let us much more readily into the truth of the story, and greatly beautify the representation. This should be observed with great attention in all historical plays; but, where the characters are more general, such as Fine Gentlemen, Fops, Beaux, Prudes, &c. (these, being the growth of all ages and nations, are to be dressed according to our present ideas of those characters, and to the appearances they make in common life, because their manners

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are



are nearly the same, though their dresses may differ. And as they are more general, it would be absurd to introduce them to us in the fashionable dress of the Poet's days, which according to the fluctuation of fashions, we may suppose, is either unknown or generally disused: For example, what should we think of a Lord Foppington now dressed with a large full-bottomed wig, laced cravat, buttons as large as apples, or a Millimant with a head-dress four stories high?

Sir Godfrey Kneller and other celebrated Painters were so sensible of this continual change of dress, that they drew their Ladies usually in their hair, and in a fashion of their own creating, which they were certain would be always new and graceful.

Mr. Cibber tells us, that, "Dogget in dressing a character to the greatest exactness, was remarkably skilful; the least article of whatever habit he wore, seemed in some degree to speak and mark the different humour he represented; a necessary care in a Comedian, in which many have been too remiss or ignorant." I've heard this confirmed

from one that performed with Dogget; and that he could with the greatest exactness paint his face so as to represent the ages of seventy, eighty, and ninety distinctly, which occasioned Sir Godfrey Kneller to tell him one day at Button's Coffee-house, that, "he excelled him in Painting; for, that he could only copy nature from the originals before him, but he (Dogget) could vary them at pleasure, and yet keep a close likeness." In the character of Money-trap, in the Confederacy, he wore an old thread-bare black coat, to which he had put new cuffs, pocket-lids, and buttons, on purpose to make its rustiness more conspicuous. The neck was stuffed so as to make him appear round shouldered, and gave his head the greater prominency; his square-toed shoes were large enough to buckle over those he wore in common, which made his legs appear much smaller than usual.

Thus, the most trifling circumstance in dress judiciously introduced will heighten a character, and have a very good effect. I doubt whether the enormity of the Mock-Doctor's wig does not add greatly in vulgar eyes to the humour of the character; I re-

member a performer in the Miser, who in his rage for the loss of his money tore open his waistcoat, and discovered an old patched flannel one under it; which single circumstance (though trifling in itself) not only greatly illustrated the character, but very much heightened the diversion of his audience. Hence it will follow, that the judgment and care of an Actor, in thus adapting his dress to his character, will add greatly to his success and reputation. I have often observed that the Foppingtons, when dressed with uncommon elegance, have greatly prepossessed the audience, though perhaps the Actor did not utter a single sentence afterwards to support that prepossession.

The dignity of tragic characters allows that the stile and dress should be proportionably so; and these being fewer in kind are not so frequently varied; but those of Comedy includes a greater variety of characters which come nearer to our conceptions. The variety of dress both in high and low life must be attended to in the Drama, otherwise the propriety cannot be supported.

## C H A P. VII.

*The errors and improprieties which an Actor is to avoid.*

**T**HUS far I have attempted to describe the several requisites for forming the complete Actor, viz. genius, education, study of nature and its passions, elocution, action, and dress: it will not now be improper to point out to him a few of the improprieties and imperfections which Actors in general of every class are apt to run into; and this shall be done as nearly as possible in the same order.

1. Where vanity has the ascendant we are apt to over-rate our abilities, and a fine person, a lively turn, and great volubility of speech, and such transient accomplishments, are thought sufficient qualifications for the Stage, while genius and intellectual endowments are seldom thought of or regarded. Some have I found so destitute of the common knowledge of pronunciation and accent, that they have been obliged to apply to a master for instruction, even in this first branch



of their art. Nay, so far have I seen this absurdity carried, that when one of this kind of Actors has by dint of severe application acquired a sort of mechanical ability of pronunciation and action, yet so indifferent was his judgment, that when put to read another part, wherein he had not been previously instructed, he understood as little of it as a person who only sings by ear does of the theory of music.

On the other hand, I have known an Actor who has had a very liberal education, and who had acquired a knowledge of his art, yet to whom nature was so unkind that his powers did not reach beyond common declamation; and so deficient was he in voice and action, that at best he could be compared only to a musician, who had a critical judgment in that science, but could neither play or sing.

2. "There are some persons," as Lord Shaftsbury observes, "so happily formed by nature, that with the greatest simplicity or rudeness of education have still something of a natural grace and comeliness in their action; and again, that others of better education, by a wrong aim and injudicious affectation of  
grace,

grace; are of all people the farthest removed from it." By this rule it will be easy to distinguish between the Actor of natural and acquired abilities; there is a grace to be found in the one, which ever makes his performance more original and closer to nature, whereof the other is at best but a painful and timid copy, like "the studied airs of a dancing-master, compared to the graceful ease and freedom of the fine gentleman,"

Performers of this class may be compared to mannerists in Painting, who when once they have acquired a certain habitude of colouring, never depart from it, nor surprize us with the novelties of grace and beauty, which are the genuine offspring of genius; like statues they are always invariably the same, and whenever the shining period comes on, previously feel for an attitude with as much sollicitude as a dexterous marksman looks out for a lucky stand to take aim from. This must be evermore disgusting; the same strain of musick perpetually played over, without any new improvements, must diminish in relish, and at length cloy instead of delight; whereas a musician who excels in his art, will throw into every piece, as

often as he performs it, such additional unstudied graces as will always give the harmony the air of novelty, and improved delight.

3. This mechanical stiffness may be imputed sometimes to Actors copying from one another rather than from nature; and for want of the same skill which their models possess, their performance is as offensive as it is unaffecting.---I know a performer of reputation on the Stage, who in holding up his hand, standing still, &c. always to a second of time, observes the same movements. One would think that his part, according to the practice of the antients, was set to music; not unlike this are the regulated movements of the renowned figures attendant on St. Dunstan's clock, where as soon as the hand points to the hour, up goes the club to tell it to every body.

But let it be observed, that in thus distinguishing the Actor of genius from the mechanical performer, I would not be understood to say that a Player to shew his genius must be perpetually varying his attitudes; I know there are some noted ones which we may suppose have obtained all the perfection they are capable

capable of, or at least that custom has so far authenticated them as not now to be conveniently departed from. Of this kind is that of Hamlet at the appearance of the ghost, and of Romeo in the Tomb-scene, &c.

When Actors are unacquainted with the just standard of nature, or want sufficient powers to reach it, they dwindle into effeminacy and contempt. How awkwardly does the fire of a Bajazet suit the spirit of a Fribble; such puny gentlemen, instead of tearing a passion to rags, let it freeze on their lips: A contrary impropriety have I observed in some of the women's characters, such as Zara, Hermione, Alicia, &c. which, though they require great fire and spirit, yet the Poet never designed that it should go beyond the bounds of nature and female delicacy. The softness and elegance of the sex ornaments every little action: every deviation therefrom into termagant rant and violence, is so far ungraceful as it approaches to or partakes of the action and manner which is natural to the opposite sex. I know an actress of this kind, and of some reputation too, in Hermione, whose action was so violent and indelicate, that she seemed  
rather



rather a man in women's cloaths that was going to fight Orestes, than an enraged disappointed princeſs.

It is very common for young performers, the Ladies in particular, in ſcenes which require the greateſt exertion of the natural powers, and in the very warmth and pathos of a ſentiment, to beſtow frequent ſide-glances on the audience, demanding their applauſe, more for their beauty of perſon or elegance of dreſs, than for their juſt acting. This vanity has diverted their attention from every idea of merit but what was centered in their own perſons; and ſo they appeared of conſequence to their private admirers, the judgment of the Public is with them of ſmall eſtimation.

A middling articulate voice is preferable to a bellowing loud one, which, though noiſy, is not diſtinct; and is as painful to the performer as it is to the audience; what Cicero ſays of the Orators of his time, may be juſtly applied to performers of this denomination, who placed all their merit in the ſtrength of their lungs, “ that it was want of ability to  
ſpeak

speech made them bawl, as lame men who cannot walk, are forced to get on horseback \*."

These unnatural swells of the voice, are like the protuberances of Bacchus compared to the proportions of a man of health and symmetry.

No less carefully to be avoided, is that perpetual monotony or sameness of tone, which some of our performers, even of judgment, fall into; the ear naturally delights in variety, and should as much as possible be gratified with it; the same repetition and cadence of the voice, like the same tune, tires the ear, and amounts at best to a cold recital, which, though it might be strictly correct, yet wants that variety and expressiveness which nature always assumes when she is in earnest.

An Actor is not to suppose, that when his speech is over his business is so too, and that he is only to remain a mere expletive on the Stage; he should carefully attend to what is done by others, and be affected accordingly, for there is as great an excellence in knowing how to behave while others are speaking, as when he speaks himself; the spirit of the scene

\* See Plutarch's life of Cicero.

and dignity of the character is as much supported by silent action as by words. I have seen some performers in Tragedy, in the very extasy of rant and madness; but when their speech expired, so did their passion, action, and motion. And, till the next paroxysm of rage returned, as Lopez in the *Mistake* says, "they look'd calmly all around."

Some Actors think themselves sufficiently deserving in their way, if they are absolutely perfect in their parts, not considering that this, though essentially necessary, is yet the smallest part of their merit, and which every school-boy can rival them in; others again, who, though they were perfectly knowing in their own parts, yet on enquiry have appeared altogether unacquainted with the plot and every other character but their own; how then can they keep up that connection which every scene requires, and appear to be as properly affected with what others are doing as with what they do themselves?

I have remarked several of our performers to be very languid and unfeeling in the first or second act of some Plays that required  
strength

strength and execution, (such as Orestes and Zanga), that they might reserve all their fire and force for the last scene. And thus the Poet loses one half of his merit, by the diffidence of the Player, who fears to exhaust himself too soon.

And it is common for Actors who have acquired some small reputation by some favourite speech or attitude, where they have happened by a desperate chance to be in the right, to introduce on every other occasion, be it ever so different or foreign, that same mode of expression or attitude, which at first acquired the transient approbation of the audience. This is a demonstrable proof of their ignorance and vanity.

The propriety of a character is often lost by the showiness of the dress. This piece of French vanity obtains but too much on our Stage. I have seen Cato and Brutus more grandly dressed than Anthony and Juba, though their philosophical turn was quite foreign to so poor a pride; and if at all proper, it could be only so in the young prince and general. It is usual to dress these characters  
in



in large full-bottom'd or tye wigs; which is both contrary to history and the known character of each, and as great an impropriety as for a Lord Foppington to wear one of their shapes. Mr. Hogarth has very justly ridiculed absurdities of this kind, by putting a bag-wig on the bust of Scipio \*. Waiting-maids too are often dressed as fine as their mistresses; and Lord Townly, who, though an elegant is a grave character, is often dressed not unlike a Foppington; this certainly was never intended by the author, and when it was first played, the dress was genteel but not glaring.

To see Richard, Henry VIII. Falstaff, &c. dressed in the habits of the times they lived in, and the others in modern ones, quite opposite, is an inconsistency which carries its own conviction with it. What should we think if Le Brun had dressed Alexander's soldiers in modern regimentals, and yet preserved the dress of their ancient commanders. Othello too in modern cloaths is a mistake of the same nature, and yet Zanga and Oroonoko still appear in their national habits. Mr. Garrick was sensible of this impropriety, and when he

\* Second Plate of Marriage à la mode.

performed

performed this character, added the propriety of the dress to his excellent performance.

I think it was Mr. Macklin who first dressed Iago properly; formerly he was dressed in such a manner, as to be known at first sight; but it is unnatural to suppose, that an artful villain, like him, would chuse a dress which would stigmatize him to every one: I think, as Cassio and he belong to one regiment, they should both retain the same regimentals.

The truth of the representation is often lost, in not suiting the character to the age of the Actor: Captain Flash is an empty military fop; yet I have seen an Actor of three-score, and of twice the bulk of such junior homebred heroes, strut and look terrible, with all the affected vivacity of twenty-two; to heighten the absurdity, he was dressed in an old scarlet coat, buff belt, basket-hilted sword, with a black major wig and stock, not much unlike one of our modern prize-fighters, or Charles the XIIth, the wig only excepted.

Time and circumstance in some of our theatrical characters, is very often overlooked, or mistaken:

mistaken: Thus Clodio comes in full dressed, though he's supposed to be just returned from his travels, and his first speech is to bid the grooms take care of his horses. On the first performance of the Recruiting Officer, Mr. Farquhar thought Mr. Keene who performed Justice Ballance had neglected the consistency of the character in preserving the same dress throughout; though in the second act, Ballance receives an account of the death of his son, and says to Worthy, "the decorum of mourning is what we owe the world, &c." and that the author's intention was, that Ballance should appear in mourning through the remainder of the Play; but Mr. Wilkes told him, "that the neglect of such a propriety was very excusable, as the solemnity of the dress would have lessened the humour of the character." Whether the Poet or Player was in the right, I shall not determine. Many other mistakes might be mentioned; I shall name but a few more. I have seen an Actor who performed Romeo, who, to heighten the character and feed his vanity, spoke the celebrated speech of Mercutio,

*O then I see Queen Mab, &c.*

In

in the same solemn declamatory manner as a lawyer pleads a cause. Is it not absurd to see Hamlet just come from on board a ship, where he had been robbed and plundered, with a well-powdered wig, and every way as nicely dressed as at court, and even face the court in the church-yard, without any alteration of garb, when it is plain he is not known till he discovers himself, by crying out, "I am Hamlet the Dane."

There is a variety of characters in our Theatre, which I don't think are sufficiently distinguished in the performance. There is too much sameness in the old men, though I don't know of any two that are drawn exactly so; nor can we find such an appearance in real life: For example, Don Lewis is testy, yet has a small dash of humour; Sir Tunbelly, merry and benevolent; Smuggler, a hypocritical debauchee; and Lovegold, a compound of every thing that is sordid and mean-spirited. Sometimes too I have observed these old gentlemen lose their character before the end of the performance, and return to all the agility and sprightliness of youth, preserving nothing about them of antiquity but their names and

M

drefs:



dress. Again, there is a remarkable distinction observable in most of our theatrical fops, which we have before observed, is not sufficiently attended to on the Stage. As the Poets have drawn them, they are all more or less copies from life. Sir Courtly Nice is squeamish, affected, and formal. Lord Fopington, in the *Relapse*, a pert coxcomb, elated with a large fortune, and proud of his person; but the most elegant and high-bred fop in all our modern Comedies, is the Lord Fopington, in the *Careless Husband*; Clodio is a pert frenchified coxcomb; and Beau Clincher is most judiciously drawn by the author as a contrast to the real fine gentleman, Sir Harry Wildair; being the mimic of a fop, without knowing what a fop is.

This last character I take to be the most difficult of any to personate in a comic way: it includes rather more of genteel life than our Players have an opportunity of being acquainted with; or if they have the opportunity, yet they want the talents: for the fine gentleman is certainly hard to hit off; but the fops and coxcombs having always some distinguishing marks and peculiarities, are known at  
first

first sight, and easily imitated; and, thanks to the present age, there are plenty of these characters every where to draw from.

It is an extreme arrogance which some take of altering and deviating from their author, by introducing some out-of-the-way words and grimaces, which were never dreamed of nor intended by him; so that, as the *Tatler* observes, "it is impossible to see the Poet for the Player." This is but a poor attempt to gain a false applause; and is a dishonour not only to the Poet, but an affront to the judicious part of his audience. I know but a very few, who are able to take in the whole meaning of the Poet, much less to amend or surpass him; and I hope this impertinence of saying more than is set down for them, will always meet with the contempt it deserves. Bayes is indeed a character with which this liberty may be taken, without infringing the laws of propriety.

As we are upon the subject of propriety and impropriety, it may not prove perhaps unentertaining to relate an odd innovation that I saw made by a company of Strolers at Worcester,

to heighten Jane Shore's distress in the fifth act. They took a hint from the old ballad story; and when she was leaving Alicia's door in that deep distress, introduced a baker trundling a penny loaf after her. The officers and guard who are supposed to attend her, immediately seized him, and led him to execution for his untimely compassion; before he went off, he broke out into the following lines from the Fair Penitent,

*That I must die, it is my only comfort :  
 Death is the privilege of human nature,  
 And life without it were not worth our taking ;  
 Thither the poor, the prisoner, and the mourner,  
 Fly for relief, and lay their burthens down.  
 Come then and take me now to thy cold arms,  
 Thou meager shade.*

ROWE.

We may guess at the judgment and taste of the audience by their being more affected and edified with this improvement, than with the most distressful scenes of the Play.

It is possible for the best performances to become sometimes the objects of ridicule: Virgil has been travestied by Cotton; Mr. Gay, in  
 his

his Farce of the What d'ye call it, has burlesqued some excellent speeches in Shakespear, Otway, Rowe, &c. so has Mr. Fielding in his Farce of Tom Thumb. If such burlesque happens to be executed with spirit and humour, it may be indulged for once or twice, for novelty sake, oftner it would grow tiresome, and a judicious mind would soon look out for higher entertainment. The summer after Cato was first performed, some of the most eminent Comedians thought its successful run would authorize a burlesque, and accordingly they employed one of the would-be-wits for that purpose. This they performed in a town near London; Norris was Cato, and Penkethman Juba: a few lines of the first speech will be a sufficient specimen of the whole.

## PORTIUS.

*It is indeed a damn'd dark cloudy morning,  
 Yon ass's bray portends approaching rain;  
 The clouds, big-bellied, teem with drizly showers,  
 To wail the fate of Rome, our mother city,  
 And Cato's too, her old dejected dad.*

But notwithstanding its humour, it was deservedly damned the second night, and notice



given to the Players, that their house should be shut up, if they attempted a repetition of this buffoonery; in which I own I can't see much harm, and we know that the best Plays that ever were exhibited at Paris, have been parodied; nor does the laugh excited by the burlesque lessen the opinion which the people have of Corneille, Racine, Crebillon, or Voltaire.

If an Actor at any time attempts to give his character any occasional touches, or higher finishings, that liberty must notwithstanding be taken with the utmost diffidence and caution; for, as in painting, though a just likeness may be taken, yet by labouring it too much, it may be insensibly lost, and the features exaggerated into deformity; so in acting, many striving to surpass their contemporaries, and wanting sufficient judgment where to fix the bounds of perfection, have run in to the most extravagant absurdities; and, as Apelles said of Protogenes, often spoil the fine things they do, for want of knowing when to leave off. I shall here take notice of one instance of this overdoing, which I take to be as strong a mark of want of judgment as underdoing, because

cause I myself was a witness of it. A young gentleman of genteel figure, who had a university education, was so judicious a critic in theatrical affairs, that he was reckoned the terror of the Players; and his opinion was supposed important enough to determine that of the town. At the repeated request of his acquaintances he condescended to perform the part of Hamlet, and the exhibition brought the greatest audience that had been remembered for many years: they expected to have seen something singularly just; but if in this hope they were disappointed, they were comforted with finding him singularly uncommon; this was the principle upon which he set out, and he strictly adhered to it, for by taking pains to differ from the manner of every other performer, he converted the whole into the most contemptible ridicule. In the first act, when the ghost appeared he fell on his knees, and wept; when it beckoned him away, he followed pensively with his arms across; in the second, where he comes in reading, he was bareheaded, with the neck of his shirt, and his waistcoat unbuttoned. I suppose he had that line in view which Ophelia says to her father in the second act:

M 4

*With*

*With his doublet all unbrac'd.*

In the last act he came in with Horatio to the grave-diggers, dressed in a scarlet coat, with sword and boots, the better to disguise himself; and notwithstanding his grief, and in the midst of his moral reflections, he laughed heartily at the grave-diggers jests. In the last scene he was not satisfied with killing the king, but (Drawcanfir-like) he killed most of his attendants, &c. &c. This was his extraordinary performance of the character; his friends were greatly disappointed, but the audience in general diverted by the unexpected burlesque. Had he confined himself to the common methods, I am certain he would have performed it to satisfaction; but in striving to go beyond any thing he had ever seen, he degraded the performance extremely.

The last impropriety I shall mention is that shameful negligence of some Actors in coming on the Stage imperfect in their parts, and applying to the prompter for assistance; this takes off from the reality, and converts a lively scene into a cold unaffecting recital.

Excuse

Excuse me, reader, if I here introduce an observation upon a failing of the like kind, which has crept into the pulpit, and is peculiar to our own Nation; namely, that of reading sermons. It is a pity that the sublimest truths, clothed in the most exalted language, should not also be accompanied with all the graces of oratory. Were these happily introduced and applied, that drowsy attention so often paid to the preacher's most elaborate efforts would vanish, and his auditors would be at once delighted and improved. What is it so much contributes to the success of the Methodists in this particular, but their deviation from this common beaten track, and delivering their discourses with that seeming earnestness which must be always striking and emphatic. I am sorry to say that the pulpit and bar in general have laid aside the use of graceful action, which is one of the greatest ornaments of oratory, and ought never to be separated from an elegant pronunciation, the remains whereof seem now to be retired or rather confined to the Senate and Stage; and even there they are but rarely displayed.

I have



I have now pointed out a few of the errors and mistakes which the Actor is to shun, as well as the excellencies he is to pursue, all which I hope will be of caution and use to him. I shall now take my leave of him, only with a few short remarks.

It is his business in all cases to observe nature and propriety; it is observable that in all capital paintings, there are a few principal figures which more remarkably strike the eye, and by that means throw the attendant ones into their proper distance; in like manner, on the Stage, the leading figures or personages in a scene, should, by their dignity of action, throw the attending characters into their proper shade of inferiority; and, then the whole, like a fine painting in perspective, will be all graceful and harmonious.

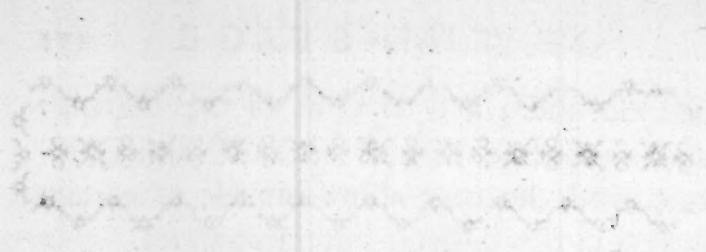
Lastly, Nature in this, as in all other arts, must be his parent and instructress: every deviation from her precepts is so far a falling short of perfection; if he follows the natural bent of his genius, and does not assume parts beyond his strength; if he is strict in marking every passion and sentiment by his action  
and

and elocution, and takes in all the assistance and improvement which art and learning recommend, he may assure himself of certain success in this difficult but pleasing art.

*First follow Nature, and your judgment frame  
By her just standard, which is still the same.  
Unerring Nature still divinely bright,  
One clear, unchang'd, and universal light,  
Life, force, and beauty, must to all impart,  
At once the source, and end, and test of art.*

POPE.

PART



# PART III

## THE HISTORICAL ACCOUNT

OF THE

REIGN OF

CHARLES THE FIRST

IN THE

SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

BY

J. H. M.

ESQ.

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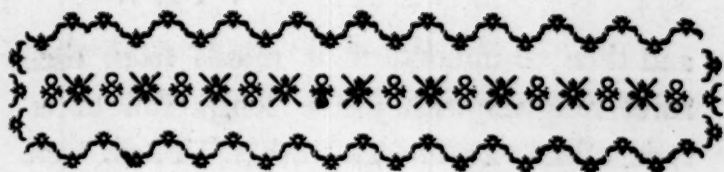
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## P A R T III.

A Short HISTORICAL ACCOUNT  
of the S T A G E Antient and Modern,  
to the Restoration.



### C H A P. I.

*Of the first rise of the Drama, and the structure  
of the Roman Theatre.*

**T**HE Stage, like most other Arts and Sciences, had very rude beginnings; time, concurring with various causes, has brought it to the perfection it now stands in. It was customary with the ancients, when they assembled together in their harvest or vintage, to celebrate that season of festivity with hymns in honour of the Gods and Heroes,  
and



## 174 A GENERAL VIEW

and then to unbend their minds from their rural fatigues with jocosé songs full of satyric raillery against each other. These were divided into chorusses, accompanied with dances and instruments, with certain recitations at intervals. The persons who made those recitations were from thenceforth called Actors. Thespis first introduced one person on the Stage for that purpose, whom Æschylus finding insufficient, he added a second, to entertain the audience more agreeably in a kind of dialogue. Their manner of representation was as simple and artless as their subjects were unpolished and innocent: their Stage, if it may be so called, was only a small eminence sodded over, not unlike our modern cockpits; they were shaded at top by the branches of the neighbouring trees neatly interwoven; the spaces between the trees were filled up with boards covered with the skins of beasts, and sometimes with boughs newly cut down. Juvenal describes it thus:

----- *ipsa dierum*

*Festorum verbosa colitur si quando theatro*

*Majestas; tandemque redit ad pulpita notum*

*Exodium* - - - - -

On

*On Theatres of turf in homely state,  
 Old Plays they act, old feasts they celebrate;  
 The same rude song returns upon the crowd,  
 And by tradition is for wit allow'd.*

DRYDEN.

Theſpis, already mentioned, was the first who attempted any alteration or improvement of these antient entertainments; he travelled up and down with his Actors and implements in a cart; and for want of better concealment, or for what other reason is not material, their faces were daubed with lees of wines\*; such was either the modesty of the times or the imperfections of the Actors; but Æschylus, his successor in the Drama, from those rude hints first supplied his Actors with decent masks, instead of their former varnish, and persuaded the Athenians to build a public Theatre, constructed entirely of wood, perhaps not unlike our modern booths; but this happening to fall by the prodigious weight of the audience, many of whom were killed, it was afterwards rebuilt at the public charge, of stone, and capable of holding upwards of twenty thousand spectators.

\* Peruncti fœcibus ora. VIRG.

The

The Romans, about one hundred and twenty years afterwards, took the first hint of their Drama from the Greeks: their Theatre differed from the Grecian only in some particular dimensions and the uses to which some parts of the building were appropriated. According to the best accounts we can collect, that part which was allotted to the spectators, was of a semicircular form, capable of containing near thirty thousand persons; the other, intended for the Actors and Scenery, ended in an oblong; the whole was divided into five parts, viz.

1. The Porticus, Scalæ, or Sedilia, which were seats disposed all round the Theatre, one above the other, where the common people were placed; and it was therefore sometimes called *Popularia*.

2. The Orchestra, where the senators, dancers, and music were seated. Hither also the knights and gentlemen resorted; and these seats were for that reason sometimes called *Æquestris*.---The intermediate space between this and the Sedilia was called *Cavea*, not unlike our modern Pit. The Orchestra of the Greeks differed from that of the Romans

in this, that in it were placed artificial vases of different tones, against which the Actor's voice reverberating, acquired a more energetic and harmonious sound.

3. The Proscenium, a place drawn from one side of the Theatre to the other, between the Orchestra and the Scene; it was higher than the Orchestra, and lower than the Scene: here the Actors performed. The space also behind the scene was called Proscenium, where the Actors retired, and the wardrobe was kept.

4. The Scene was fixed on a triangular machine, and contrived to turn on an axle or pin, so as to face the audience. It represented on one side, 1. a grand city; 2. a magnificent palace, or portico; 3. a wild forest, cave, or meadow.

When a Comedy was to be played, the first of these was turned towards the Audience; if a Tragedy, the second; and for a satyrical piece the third.

The underpart of the Stage was for risings, sinkings, &c. and mostly answered the same uses as ours.



The Roman Theatre was at first only composed of wood. Pompey first erected a fixed one among them, which was a noble edifice of square stones ; but that of M. Scaurus, mentioned by Pliny, was the most magnificent that antiquity boasts of. The Scenes, or Stage, were divided into three rows of pillars, one above another, the back was of marble, and the others of glass, or chrystal ; the whole interspersed with three thousand statues: the richest stuffs, tapestries, and paintings, were employed in its decorations, though it was not intended to stand above a month. There was another building erected afterwards by Curio, a Roman knight, inferior in magnificence to the former, where the Players performed in the first part of the day. To this another was added, and contrived by the help of springs and hinges to turn round without shifting the Scenery ; which then formed one spacious amphitheatre, where the people were entertained with the fights of gladiators, and wild beasts, when the theatric diversions were over.

We may judge of the grandeur of the ancient Theatres, by the magnificent taste for building which the Romans and Greeks possessed,

fed, and by the remains of antient architecture yet extant.---For a more particular and exact description of them, Vitruvius, Montfaucon, Rollin, and Kennet, may be consulted.

## C H A P. II.

*Of the antient Masks.*

THE Masks are of very antient invention, but were not used theatrically till the time of Æschylus. They are said to have been first made of the bark of trees, (*Oraque Corticibus sumunt horrenda cavatis. Virg.*) of leather, covered with stuff or linnen, but those being found easily to wear out, they made others of wood, which the Sculptor fashioned to the Poet's fancy. They were also sometimes composed of a leaf called Arcion; which Pliny tells us was the broadest leaf that could be found: *Quidam Arcion personatam vocant cujus folio nulum est latius.* The antient Masks served only simply to cover the face, but those of the Theatre were a kind of helmets which covered the whole head, and represented not only the several features, but also the hair, beard, and ears, according to the several characters, and

even extended to the ornaments which women used in their head-dresses. The different age, sex, character, and passions, were so strongly depicted on them, that the spectators apprehended at first sight for whom they were intended, and required no other explanation: so strongly were the antients of opinion, that a particular cast of countenance was essential to every character and passion, that, whenever a Play was delivered to the Actors, the authors also gave a draught of the Masques proper for it. One, a complete draught of these, is yet to be seen in an antient copy of Terence, in the Vatican; and there are also sketches of them in M. Dacier's Terence.

There were tragic, comic, and satyric Masks, all which had exaggerated features, a wide gaping mouth, and seemed, according to Lucian, ready to devour the spectators. A fourth sort has been also found, the features of which were very regular, and the deformity of the others did not enter into their composition; these probably belonged to the Dancers.

We have reason to apprehend there were three other kinds in use with the antients, though

though they have neglected to mention them, viz. 1. Those which represented men naturally as they are. 2. Those which were for shades and ghosts, and had something frightful in their appearances. 3. Such as characterised furies, gorgons, &c. these were the most terrible of all. Pausanias tells us, Eschylus was the first who introduced the hideous and frightful Mask, and that Euripides made use of some with serpents on their heads. Lastly, the satyric Masks, which were the most ridiculous and extravagant of all, and founded only on the imagination of the Poets; for, besides the fauns and satyrs (from whence they had their name) they had those also of Cyclops, Centaurs, and all the monstrous animals which Fable has created, and here it was they were most necessary.

These Masks, it must be allowed, were of the greatest advantage to the antient Actors, as thereby they could play a variety of characters without any inconvenience from age or sex, and saved the spectators the tiresomeness of seeing always the same faces; they could also by this method multiply their Actors at pleasure, as every piece had its pecu-



liar cast of countenance, and besides could make the appearance of those pieces more perfect whose intrigue depended on a resemblance of persons, such as *Amphytrion* and the *Menechmæ*; whereas with us, those characters can never acquire a sufficient probability, and imagination must be called in to supply the defect.

It is not improbable that as the antients were so skilled in Painting and Sculpture, the utmost care was taken to make the Mask conformable to the Poet's idea: thus *Hercules*, *Ajax*, *Ulysses*, &c. were furnished with Masks denotive of their several characters of strength, courage, fortitude, and sagacity. *Niobe*, *Electra*, &c. appeared weeping; and the Masks of comic characters were of a pleasant cast. If there was a variety of passions included in the same character, the Actor had either different Masks or a different passion painted on each side; and according to the passion wherewith he was supposed to be influenced, he shewed the corresponding profile to the spectators.

As the antient Theatres were of far greater extent than ours, those Masks were probably  
coloured

coloured much stronger than the life, that they might have their proper effect at a distance; they were likewise hollow and lined with brass, or some other sonorous substance, which greatly assisted the voice, gave it a deeper tone, and carried it to a greater distance. This is one principal reason why they admitted the use of Masks; for as some of the spectators were upwards of one hundred yards distant from the Stage, they could not discern the variable Play of the softer passions in the countenance; and for the same reason the natural voice would have died away, and been lost before it reached the ear.

These Masks were further necessary to them, because as they were not only very careful in distinguishing particular characters, but even sometimes copied exact likenesses, they also gave the same air of majesty, fury, and terror to their Heroes and Demi-gods which they supposed them to possess when living. This gave their representations the strongest appearances of truth and reality, as they were in all respects conformable to the commonly received opinions of the times.

The principal inconvenience of the antient Masks was their want of motion to express the transitions of the passions; but the structure of their Theatre, and the great distance of the Stage, even from the nearest part of the Audience, as has been observed before, would have deprived the Actor of all merit in the exhibition, had he appeared in his own countenance.

Notwithstanding all the perfection which they had attained in this art, it is obvious, that the use of Masks made every thing much easier to them than to us. The passion being ready drawn, there was no need of straining the features to their semblance; and they had nothing more to do than to study and imitate propriety of voice and action; the same person might at different times represent a youth, an aged man, a young damsel, &c. and all without any apparent impropriety: but with us it is quite otherwise. The different appearances and dress of each passion, as they are expressed by the countenance, voice, and gesture, must be closely studied, and every help introduced, which will vary the representation as much as possible. According to this mode  
of

of acting, to recite judiciously and melodiously was an Actor's greatest merit; whereas with us, these are but assistant perfections, and a man can never hope to excel, that has not a marking countenance, strong feeling, and the power of altering his features so as to express his feelings.

I think it a pity, however, that the Masks should be totally laid aside; they would be of admirable service, even at this day, to many of our Players who assume parts to which their abilities are not at all adapted: thus might that vacancy of countenance, that total absence of sentiment which they sometimes display in parts that require the utmost energy of passion, be happily concealed.

The Mask, Sock, and Buskin, constituted the most material differences between the antient and modern Players. The Sock and Buskin were the antient appendages of Tragedy and Comedy; the former is described by some to be a kind of a high shoe reaching above the ankle; others say it was only a low common shoe, the use of which on the Theatre was confined to Comedy. The Buskin was a purple



ple coloured boot of a quadrangular form, which reached above the mid-leg, tied under the knee, and richly ornamented with jewels. The thickness of the sole gave a considerable elevation to the ordinary stature; it was the peculiar distinction of Tragedy. It is said to have been worn promiscuously by either sex; and that the Roman ladies used it to raise their height; however, the Sock and Buskin have ever since been the characteristics of Comedy and Tragedy.

## C H A P. III.

*Of the antient Tragedy and Comedy in Greece;  
and their Authors.*

THE licentious raillery indulged by the antients in their annual festivals gave rise to the old satyric Drama; this was mostly extemporaneous droll and mimicry, by way of dialogue. But, however, from this rude beginning, the Poets, who were the Divines and Philosophers of the age, took the hint of conveying their instructions in a more pleasing dress. Thespis and Æschylus were the first who made any sort of regular tragic poems,

poems; Sophocles and Euripides gave it almost the polish of perfection. Æschylus infused a spirit of majesty and dignity into Tragedy, to which it was before unknown. His diction is sublime; but Sophocles his rival, who appeared about twenty-six years afterwards, improved it farther, and added a tenderness to his characters, which was wanting in the other; he was called the Bee, for the sweetness of his verses. Quintilian, speaking of these two Poets, says: *Tragœdias primum in lucem protulit Æschylus, sublimis gravis & grandiloquus, sepe usque ad vitium. Longe clarius illustraverunt hoc opus Sophocles atque Euripides: Quorum in dispari dicendi vi, uter sit Poeta melior, inter plurimos queritur.* Lib. 10. chap. 1.

It is hard to say, whether Æschylus or Sophocles was the most excellent; but this we can with pleasure assure the public, Euripides has been translated by a gentleman of Trinity-college, Dublin, who intends to print it, as has Sophocles by a fellow of Trinity-colledge, Cambridge; and both of them are men capable of preserving all the spirit, and every excellency of the originals.

Tragedy

Tragedy having reached its summit of perfection under these three great masters, no others were afterwards taken notice of in a tragic way; and now Comedy began to be improved. The first comic Poets we read of among the Greeks, were Chronides, Magnes, and Phormas, who began to improve Comedy in Eschylus's time; and after his death, Cratinus, Plato, Epicharmes, Crates, Eupolis, Aristophanes. The unlimited raillery of Comedy was highly agreeable to the people of Athens, while that state continued free, and very justifiable while it was kept within the bounds of decency, mentioned by Horace; for the greatest men not being spared in their theatrical entertainments, they were thereby kept from infringing on the liberties of the people. The Poets were reckoned the most useful members of the commonwealth, and performed the offices of statesmen and philosophers, in reforming the government and instructing the people.

Eupolis, Cratinus, and Aristophanes were particularly excellent. We have no remains of any of their works but of the last; and of the many dramatic pieces he wrote, only eleven  
are

are transmitted down to us. He excelled in a spirit of satire or lampoon, and the Attic salt of the Greeks abounded more in him than in any other writer, but the rusticity of the age in which he lived is visible in the plainness of his characters. He drew them such as they were from life, but was not always happy in the choice; he had great faults and great beauties. His stile being warm, lively, and natural, and his characters just, he could not fail of pleasing a common taste; but the keenness of his wit did not entirely atone for his personal abuse, and low buffoonery. What amends could he make society for not only publicly abusing Socrates, but even going so far as to name him upon the Stage, when he himself was present.

But as even the most innocent designs may be perverted to the worst purposes, the poignancy of their satire, no longer pointed at the wicked, but was levelled at religion, virtue, and the most respectable characters, either by naming them publicly, or having masks painted to such a likeness that none could mistake them. This at length obliged the state to interpose, and to enact laws against all personal



sonal invective for the future. From a consideration of the nature of the exhibitions at this time permitted on the Greek Theatre, we are led to suppose that Aristophanes was then the Foote of Greece; and in many things the English is not inferior to the Grecian mimic.

The Poets being restrained from personal abuse, soon found means to elude the law, and affixed feigned names to their characters, but still drew them so like, that the spectators could not be easily mistaken: by this means they enjoyed a double advantage, that of bestowing their censure where they pleased, or where it was merited, with impunity, and at the same time of enjoying the delicate satisfaction of their Audience's finding out and comparing the portraits which they drew with their originals; this continued customary till the time of Alexander the Great, who observing that the licentious freedom of the Poets encreased daily, totally suppressed it. From hence the new Comedy arose, which no longer glanced at, or described particular persons. The names and events were fictitious; and as the characters and manners were taken at large from real life, no particular

cular offence could be taken. Menander was the inventor or improver of this kind of Comedy, which was the finest and most useful of any; he introduced into his dramatic pieces an agreeable and refined vein of spirit and humour, confined within the strictest bounds of decency, to which his predecessor Aristophanes was almost a stranger. There are little or no remains of this excellent Poet handed down to us, though he is said to have wrote and prepared upwards of a hundred Comedies for the Stage. We may form an idea of his merit from the character Quintilian has left of him, "That the brightness of his merit had entirely eclipsed the reputation of all the preceding writers in that way." Terence has derived the greatest part of his fame from him, by translating a few select Comedies of his; and though the Latin bard is in general allowed to be very excellent, yet he is thought by the best judges to have fallen very short of his great original.

## C H A P. IV.

*Of the Roman theatrical entertainments, and dramatic Authors.*

**W**HEN the Romans began to enjoy the blessings of peace, they gradually refined themselves from that savage rusticity which their simple manner of living, and restless military genius had enured them to. The Greeks were their models both of learning and politeness; and from them they derived their first theatrical hints.

*Græcia capta ferum victorem cepit & artes  
Intulit agresti latio.----* HOR.

About one hundred and thirty years after the Grecian Theatre had reached its full splendor, dramatic entertainments began to be encouraged in Rome; like the Grecian it took its rise from the rural jocularities of the common people. At first they entertained themselves in their festivals with irregular verses, the product of jollity and wine, full of gross raillery, attended with dances and low buffoonery. These were called Fescennine verses, from

Fescennia, a city of Etruria, from whence they were brought to Rome.

*Fescennina per hunc inventa licentia morem  
Versibus alternis opprobria rustica fudit.*

HOR.

These afterwards were exchanged for more innocent entertainments, called *Satyræ*. They only consisted of inoffensive raillery, from whence all obscenity was banished; and they were the favourite diversion of the people, till Livius Andronicus and some others presented the people with several innocent characters in both kinds, which they had translated from the Greek; but none of their works have reached us. The only Poet of any note among them was Plautus. Nineteen of his theatrical pieces have been handed down to us. He was the same among the Romans as Aristophanes as among the Greeks; but is reputed to have come nearest of all the dramatists to the true Attic wit, which included every thing perfect. In some of his writings he has excellent maxims for the conduct of human life, but in others he often degenerates into absurdity and obscenity; which indeed was the fault of the Pagan world:

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yet



yet his scenes are full of humour, and his characters greatly diversified. The *Attellane fabula* succeeded the *Satyræ*, which were select pieces of wit and merriment, intended to relieve the heaviness of Tragedy; and became ever afterwards inseparably connected with it; I apprehend not much unlike our Tragi-comedy. These, madam Dacier remarks, were in so much esteem, “ That the  
 “ persons who acted in them were not rank-  
 “ ed with the comedians, nor obliged to un-  
 “ mask on the stage when they played ill, as  
 “ others were, and, as a peculiar honour, they  
 “ were allowed to enlist in the army; there-  
 “ fore low and trivial verses were beneath  
 “ the dignity of the *Attellane*.”

Among the Romans the dramatic dresses were distinguished into several kinds: viz. *Togatæ*, *Palliatæ*, *Prætextæ*, *Trabeates*, and *Tabernariæ*, and varied upon the Stage as the characters required.

The Toga being the common habit of the Romans, was used by their actors, when any story drawn from the manners of common life,

life, wherewith it was to be supposed the Actors and audience were perfectly well acquainted, was represented.

The Palliatæ were used when those Tragedies or Comedies were acted which were of Greek original; the Pallium or Cloak being the ordinary dress of that nation. Here it may not be improperly remarked, how very careful they were in adjusting the propriety of their dress to their character, as well as their voice and action.

The Prætextæ were of a more exalted and serious cast; possibly, the difference between them and the Togatæ was much the same as that which we suppose to be between high or genteel Comedy, and the middling or low. Their names imply as much. The Prætextæ were, the habits bordered with purple, worn by the magistrates and Roman gentry; and the Toga was the usual dress of the common people.

The Romans were pleased also to distinguish the inferior characters of their Drama, by

another name, viz. *Trabeates*. The dress of this name was appropriated to soldiers and sailors, and others of that cast.

To which we may add, those called *Tabernariæ*, which were sketches of the manners of the meanest people, such as constitute the *Dramatis Personæ* of our farces.

The actors of *Mimes* performed bare-footed; they were pieces of the most low and farcical kind, and mostly exhibited in dumb show, from whence our present *Pantomimes* are derived; but they were much more ingenious in their art, and could represent the thoughts and passions with such admirable dexterity, that a foreign prince having seen one of them perform in Rome, requested, as a favour of Nero, that he might be allowed to carry with him to his own country that *Mime*, who could by his expressive action alone convey his sentiments to people of the most different languages.

The Roman Theatre was in its meridian of perfection in the time of Terence. Of all the Roman dramatic writers he came the nearest

nearest to the elegant simplicity and Attic purity of the Grecian Drama; he made Menander speak the language of Rome with the utmost grace and delicacy, suited his characters to nature and truth, and drew the manners of the Romans with the most happy propriety. Plautus has more life and variety; his beauties appear suddenly and surprisngly; in Terence they preserve a constant glow and uniformity, and leave us nothing more to desire.

There were several other poets who attempted Tragedy and Comedy at Rome; but as none of their pieces having survived, we can form no idea of their merits in either way.

These theatric pieces both of Greece and Rome were interspersed with Chorusses, which explained the subject to the spectators, and made moral remarks on it.

The music played during the whole performance. The musician had two flutes of different size, the one a base and the other a treble. The base had but a small number of holes, the treble a great variety, and gave a



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shrill sharp sound ; the flutes were sometimes unequal, but had a certain agreement between them, like our thirds, fifths, or octaves. The music was sometimes guided by the subject of the play ; so that the people could tell beforehand, from hearing these instruments, what the performance was to be ; at other times it was adapted to the occasion. If the play was performed at a funeral solemnity, the music was grave, and slow ; if on a joyful occasion, it was brisk and airy, and for religious incidents it was made to partake of the nature of both.

### C H A P. V.

#### *Of the ancient Actors.*

**I**T is certain that Thespis and Æschylus, the first founders of the antient Drama, were performers of their own pieces : the one having added a second or third actor, or gesticulator, to enliven the old heroic ballads of his time, and the other given them the Mask, Sock, and Buskin.

How passionately fond the ancients were of dramatic entertainments, may be inferred from  
the

the sumptuous Theatres they erected, and the immense salaries they paid to those Actors who excelled in their profession.

At Athens the Actors were always persons of good birth and education: Poets, Orators, and even Kings, did not disdain to appear on the Stage, as Cornelius Nepos informs us; this being thought in those times of simplicity, neither injurious to reputation, nor descending from dignity. And tho' Players were not in so much estimation at Rome, as their Stage had not attained the perfection of the Grecian, and because of the warlike genius of that people; yet if they were artists in their business, and men of probity in their private lives, they were respected and esteemed by the chief persons of the commonwealth.

It is certain, that they neglected no method, and spared no expence which could contribute to the perfection of their theatrical entertainments; and the high sense they had of merit in this way, may be learned from the great encomiums they have handed down to us of two of their most eminent performers,

Roscius and Æsopius; encomiums which we are certain were only paid to real merit by a people of the most refined ears and delicate sensibility, who only were the best judges of it.

Roscius was born at Lanuvium, and brought up at Selonium, a village about sixteen miles distance from Rome, on the Appian way; he gave such early proofs of the pregnancy of his genius, that the greatest lords of Rome undertook the care of his education, and gave his talents a cultivation agreeable to their natural bent. He is described as most agreeable in his person, and the model to all the youth in Rome of every thing that was truly graceful. Cicero says, that he was formed both to move and to please; and that “ he was so excellent an artist, that he seemed the only person who deserved to tread the Stage; yet so excellent a man in all other respects, that he seemed the only man of all others, who should not have taken up that profession.” *Cum artifex ejusmodi sit, ut solus dignus videatur esse quam in scena spectatur; tum vir ejusmodi est ut solus dignus videatur qui in ea non accedat.*

The

The same author informs us, "that his excellencies became at length proverbial; and the greatest praise that could be given to men of genius in any particular profession, was, that each was a Roscius in his art." *Jamdiu consecutus est, ut in quo quisquis artifex excelleret, is in suo genere Roscius diceretur.* Cic. de Orat. Lib. 1.

Notwithstanding the agreeableness of his person, he is said to have had a squint in his eyes; which defect his mask in a great measure concealed, yet left enough to discover the fire there which passion had lighted up. This is what, I suppose, Cicero alludes to in his second Book de Orat. *Sepe ipsum vidi, cum ex persona mihi ardere oculi hominis histrionis videntur.* Though doubtless there were some parts in which this natural defect was not much observed, such as Parasites, and the like; and possibly this might have been one reason why he confined himself chiefly to Comedy.

Roscus was Cicero's friend and instructor in the art of Oratory, and that great model of oratory, in giving rules to his pupil to prepare  
for



for great movements, after saying, that an orator ought to give his hearers time to breathe, and let their admiration rest, and to imitate the Painters who throw into shade and distance some part of their pictures, that the rest may seem to rise with greater effect, introduces Roscius as an example of this, founding some verses with mildness and negligence, in order to raise the following ones to their true pitch of passion; so that it is likely he understood the contrast of *clara obscura* perfectly well.

It is observed by a writer on this subject, that, "with the antients the Sock and Buskin never interfered; Sophocles and Euripides never wrote Comedies, nor Aristophanes and Menander Tragedies."---- In like manner, "Roscius finding the strength of his genius to lie in Comedy, attached himself wholly to it, as Æsopus, for the same reason, only assumed tragic characters." (*Roscius citatior Æsopus gravior fuit, quod hic in Tragedias, ille in Comedias egit.*---Quint.) This, by the way, is a useful hint, both to our Poets and Players, to chuse subjects only for writing and acting to which their abilities are adequate.

No

No body is ignorant of the share which Roscius had in Cicero's friendship; and it was by the advantage of his precepts and example, "that he laid the foundation of his oratorical fame, and improved himself in the art of elocution. Roscius during the time of his friend's exile, repeated some verses on the exile of Telamon, and the sufferings of Priam, with such deep and feeling distress, that the whole audience perceived to whom he alluded, his very enemies wept, and Cicero was soon after recalled from banishment." The high value which the Romans set upon the talents of this Actor, will appear by the immense estate he left his son, which was valued at two hundred thousand pounds sterling; it was this son who afterwards in a fit of wantonness, dissolved some pearls of great value in his liquor, and drank them off.

The ancient Actors studied the art of touching the affections, with great industry. Æsopus, Plutarch tells us, had wrought himself once up to such a transport of rage, in representing Atreus deliberating how he should avenge himself of Thyestes, that he struck one of his servants hastily crossing the Stage  
 7 with

with his truncheon, and laid him dead on the spot. Polus, another Actor of eminence, brought the urn of his beloved child on the Stage, instead of the supposed one of Orestes. This filled him with such real grief, as was soon sympathetically felt by his audience. And thus we see no expedient was neglected, which could give the performance the greater appearance of reality.

#### CH A P. VI.

*Of the first rise of the modern Theatre, particularly the British.*

WHEN the Roman empire was overwhelmed by the invasions of the northern nations, when Gothic barbarity and monkish ignorance darkened the world, the Stage declined, the Muses withdrew, and polite literature was no more. Then monstrous fictions of giants, champions, and distressed damsels, were spun out in monasteries by dreaming monks; and, to the destruction of reason and common sense became the most favourite amusements of the people.

The

The Mimi of the Romans were the last who quitted the Stage; and these became so low and degenerate, as to strolc from town to town, representing the most contemptible, and low buffooneries; other nations adopted them, and they were well known all over Europe, about the eleventh or twelfth centuries. Most of their exhibitions were extempore; and from their talents at ridicule and burlesque, the words Mimic and Mimicry have been appropriated to all characters of this kind.

In this country they were called Mummers, a small change of the word Mimi or Mimics; they wore masks, and were otherways disguised, which gave them an opportunity of committing many outrages with impunity; so that in the time of Edw. III. they were suppressed by authority. Much about this time we may date the introduction of the sacred mysteries presented by way of interludes. These were subjects borrowed from the scripture, and were the prevailing taste of Europe, at that time.

They



They were in the highest reputation here in the reign of Richard II. Henry IV. and even down to the reign of Henry VIII. In Richard the second's time, the scholars of St. Paul's presented them at a very great expence at Christmas; the parish-clerks did the same at Skinner's Well in 1390; and in 1409 at Clerkenwell, which place obtained its name from their custom of performing there. It is not improbable that these representations were almost as early as the Conquest, but interlarded at intervals with the lowest buffoonery, to amuse the populace.

The subjects of those Plays were not always taken from the scriptures, but also from the miracles supposed to be wrought by saints, confessors, and martyrs, in those days of darkness and superstition. They were acted, both in private houses, and on public Stages. When one of these miracles was to be represented, an amphitheatre used to be erected in an open field; into which devils, fools, &c. were introduced much like the antient *Satyræ*, and these unaccountable medleys were the entertainments of the country-people, who resorted thither from all parts.

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The stupidity, as well as profanity, of those religious representations, was the occasion of their suppression; to these succeeded Mysteries, which had something of a more regular form and meaning. They were allegorical representations of the virtues and vices of the mind, and with them common sense and Poetry began to dawn upon the world. The Provençal Poets were the first refiners of the French language, and gave the first hints of reformation to the Drama. The French, Spaniards, and other nations, had Poets of the like kind, who celebrated their national heroes in their pastoral sonnets, and perhaps composed the Poetry of those mysteries. They were not abolished in Europe till about the sixteenth century; at which time learning and the polite arts were revived in Italy, under the culture and influence of the family of the Medicis, whose polite taste directed that of the public to whatever was beautiful.

At the time of the Reformation there were certain dramatic moral representations so contrived, as to influence and coincide with the prevailing opinions of the times; this might have been the occasion of a law enacted

ed in Henry the eighth's time, to restrain the liberties they took in striking at the newly received doctrine. The performers of those pieces had no regular establishment; they resorted to noblemen's palaces, and private houses, and the pieces themselves were so disposed, as that five or six persons could represent a great variety of characters; they were in vogue even in the days of Queen Elizabeth, and Shakespear has made several satirical allusions to them in his Plays.

Thus, the British Stage, like the antient, had almost the same rude beginnings, and it continued in a state of imperfection till the glorious reign of Queen Elizabeth, when Shakespear and Jonson arose, the glories of their age and nation. The first by the force of heaven-born genius, and the other with the most consummate learning and art, almost all at once raised the Stage to such dignity and perfection as has never since been out-done.

Under the influence of this excellent princess, learning and the polite arts flourished along with the Stage.

The esteem which she had for the Drama contributed not a little to its advancement in her reign. She was the first who reduced its professors into a more regular company, and dignified them with privileges that brought them into higher estimation than ever, and set them far above the contempt of their puritanical censurers. They were called her Majesty's Servants and sworn Comedians. And so prevalent was now the theatrical taste, that many noblemen and private gentlemen entertained companies of Comedians for their own private entertainment.

The children of St. Paul's school, who performed the Mysteries in 1578, and the parish-clerks, who performed about twelve years afterwards, are the earliest companies we read of: the children of St. Paul's are said to have continued acting (those Moralities I suppose) down to the year 1618, long after Tragedy and Comedy were introduced.

Mr. Richard Edwards was proprietor of the first company, under Queen Elizabeth, called the children of the chapel. The children of the Revels after them became very fa-

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mous ;



mous ; and most of Shakespear's and Jonson's Plays were first performed by them. So universal was a theatrical inclination at that time, that Plays were acted, not only by the regular companies already mentioned, but by private gentlemen, students in the university, Inns of Court, and even by the London prentices.

There were seventeen Play-houses built in different parts of the town, from the years 1570 to 1630, and all filled with different companies. Those in Black-friars, Salisbury-court, and the Cock-pit, were covered, and pieces acted in them by candle-light ; the others were open at top (like the antient Theatres) and their representations made by daylight. Our ancestors were so early in timing both their business and diversion, that they began to act about four in the afternoon, and had done early in the night.

At that time mere force of genius supported the Stage ; for, in Shakespear's time it was quite undecorated, and had only a blanket or curtain of coarse linsley-wolfey cloth, which, when drawn up, discovered nothing extraordinary. The walls, at best, were hung with old tapestry,

tapestry, and sometimes they were but plainly matted; so that the audience were obliged to supply the place of the Scene by the strength of imagination alone.

It is probable that the low prices of the Theatre prevented its decoration at that time. Those inimitable authors could not be ignorant of the pomp of the ancients; yet as the plain honesty of the age was sufficiently delighted more with language and sentiment than shew, the Authors or Managers looked no farther; and both parties were satisfied.

This was the state of the Stage in the reigns of Queen Elizabeth and King James the first; but when King Charles the first came in, he, being a Prince of a melancholy austere temper, did not give much attention to the improvement of the Theatre; and chose masks, and moral representations, as more innocent entertainments. Being an exquisite judge of Painting and Music, he spared no expence of either, when they were exhibited at court. The following, among others, were performed at that time:

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*Coelum Britannicum*, a Masque, wrote by Carewe, one of the gentlemen of the bed-chamber, set to music by Mr. Laws, and performed by Charles I. and his court at Whitehall in 1633.

The Vision of the twelve Goddeses; by Daniel. Performed by the Queen and her Ladies at Hampton-court, 1623.

*Luminalia*; or, the Festival of Light. A Mask, performed on Shrove-tuesday night, by the Queen and her Ladies, 1637.

Sr. Wm. Davenant's Temple of Love. Performed at Whitehall, by Q. Henrietta, the Marchioness of Hamilton, Countess of Oxford, Duke of Lenox, Earls of Newport, Desmond, &c.

The Scenery and Machinery were contrived by that celebrated artist Inigo Jones.

The troubles and confusions of this Prince's reign, and above all the hypocritical severity of the fanatics, who had obtained but too much influence

influence in the public affairs, soon suppressed and silenced the Stage.

During the commonwealth, the Players were persecuted and dispersed. They had no other livelihood, but by going five, or six, in a party, and performing select Scenes out of the most celebrated Plays at gentlemen's houses. These Scenes were afterwards collected, and published in one volume in 1670, by one Francis Kirkman, who had been one of those itinerant Actors, under the name of The Wits, or Sport upon Sport. One was called The Humours of the Lame Commonwealth. This is only the Scene out of the Royal Merchant, where the beggars chuse a king. Another the Grave-makers, which was the first and second Scenes of the fifth Act of Hamlet. Mr. Cox, the Comedian, composed several new ones, which he added to this collection. He was the principal Actor in those pieces; and performed at Oxford, during the Usurpation, with very great applause.

The only entertainments which were exhibited at that time in London, were Operas. Sir Wm. Davenant, notwithstanding the dislike



like which those in power had to dramatic entertainments, had interest enough to have these permitted. They consisted of declamation and music. The words were of his own composition, and may be found in his works; the Music by Coleman and Laws, two eminent masters, and were performed at Rutland-house: after tolerable success there, he removed to the Cock-pit in Drury-lane. One of them entitled, "The cruelty of the Spaniards in Peru, expressed by vocal and instrumental Music, and by art of perspective in Scenes, represented daily at the Cock-pit in Drury-lane, at three in the afternoon punctually, 1658." This is said to have been read and approved of by Cromwell; as it contained some severe strokes on the Spaniards, with whom he was at variance.

When the gloom of civil dissention was cleared up, Monarchy and the Stage were restored together. The scattered remnants of six Play-houses, which had subsisted in Charles I's time, were then formed into one company, and acted for the first time at the Red bull Play-house, in St. John's street. They afterwards built another

other in Clare-street, Clare-market, in both which places they acted from 1660, to 1663.

About this time, Mr. Thomas Killigrew obtained a patent from the King for erecting a company of Comedians, who were thence-forwards called his Majesty's Company of Comedians, and acted under Mr. Killigrew's directions at Drury-lane.

Previous to this, in 1659, Mr. Rhodes, a Bookseller at Charing-cross, who had been formerly Wardrobe-keeper to King Charles I's Comedians in Black-friars, had obtained a licence to set up a company of Players at the same place. Those celebrated Actors, Betterton, and Kynaston (who were his apprentices) performed at this Theatre; the former in men's, the latter in women's parts. And Sir William Davenant having obtained a patent for erecting a company, under the title of the Duke of York's company, took Mr. Betterton, and all that remained of Mr. Rhode's company into it. In 1663, he opened his Theatre in Lincoln's-inn-fields with a Tragedy of his own writing, called The Siege of Rhodes, where the Stage was first improved

by Scenery. Both these companies were under the patronage of the King and Duke, and greatly encouraged by the Public. By a private agreement, these companies were never to act the same Play at both houses, which must have added greatly to the entertainment of the town. But Davenant finding that Killigrew's company had better performers, and met with greater success, was resolved to rival them by feasting the eye and ear, independent of the understanding. Dramatic Operas were now for the first time introduced; and in them were united all the elegancies of Music and Painting.

Downes tells us, this company continued acting at Lincoln's-inn-fields till 1671; but this Theatre not proving sufficiently commodious, they built a very elegant one in Dorset-garden. Mr. Betterton, while this Theatre was building, went over to France, by the direction of King Charles II. to take a view of their Scenery and Machinery; and on his return very much improved the English Stage in both. These expensive decorations obliged Sir William from that time to raise the prices of admittance. The boxes, which were formerly but half a crown, he raised to four shillings;

lings; the pit from eighteen pence to half a crown; the first gallery from a shilling to eighteen pence; and the upper gallery from sixpence to a shilling.

The principal Actors in Killigrew's company growing old, and the audiences declining, the two companies united in 1686.

The Actors of Killigrew's company were as follow: The famous Mr. Lacy, (who was an excellent low Comedian, and so pleasing to King Charles II. that he had his picture drawn in three several characters, which are now at Windsor; his principal character was Falstaff,) Bird, Buft, Cartwright, Clun, Shatterell, Kynafton, Winterfel, Griffin, Goodman. The women were, Mrs. Marshall, Uphill, James, Rutter, Knight, Bootel, and the celebrated Nell Gwin. In Mr. Rhodes's company were Betterton, Sheppy, Lovel, Underhill, R. Noakes, Turner, Dixon; and the following men performed women's parts, viz. Kynafton, J. Noakes, Wm. Betterton, Angel Mofely, Floyd, &c. To this company Sir Wiliam Davenant added Harris Price, Richards, Smith, Blayden, Sandford, Medbourne,



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bourne, Young, Norris; and women, Mrs. Davenport, Saunderson, Davis, Long, Gibbs, Norris, Holden, and Jennings.

It is somewhat surprising, that till this time women were never brought upon the Stage. Had there been a Cibber or Pritchard in those days, we might have expected that their inimitable performances would have excited the authors to draw their female characters in a more extensive manner, which would have added greatly to the excellence of the Drama.

### C H A P. VII.

*Of the most eminent British Actors from Queen Elizabeth's time to the Restoration.*

AS the materials we are furnished with, relative to these old theatrical worthies, are so few and imperfect, it cannot be expected an exact character can be given either of their excellencies or imperfections; and, had it been customary with the first dramatic authors, to annex the Player's names to the parts they performed, we might form a tolerable judgment of them. It would  
have

have been also a satisfaction to the world, to have known to whom the principal characters were entrusted, and particularly what parts were performed by our immortal genius, Shakespeare, while he continued on the Stage.

Such of them whose merits distinguished them among their cotemporaries, and obtained those high applauses from our forefathers, (who were no indifferent judges) were as follow :

Burbage stands foremost in the list of Actors prefixed to Shakespear's Plays, published by Hemings and Condell ; and the excellent character which has been handed down to us of him, requires that here also he should be first mentioned. Flecknoe wrote a parallel between Burbage and Hart.

Sir Richard Baker says of him and Allen, " that they were two such Actors as no age " must ever look to see the like." His epitaph, preserved by Cambden, is only *Exit Burbage*, a laconic compliment of equal honour to him in his profession of Actor, as that of " O rare Ben Jonson" is to the latter as a Poet. He  
was

was the original Richard III. and was joined with Shakespear, Fletcher, Hemings, and Condell, in the licence granted by King James I. to act Plays in any part of England. There is a story of these two Actors, which for the sake of the entertainment it may afford the reader, I shall here introduce, without any precursory excuse.

One evening when Richard III. was to be performed, Shakespear observed a young woman delivering a message to Burbage in so cautious a manner as excited his curiosity to listen to. It imported, that her master was gone out of town that morning, and her mistress would be glad of his company after Play; and to know what signal he would appoint for admittance. Burbage replied, three taps at the door, and it is I, Richard the Third. She immediately withdrew, and Shakespear followed 'till he observed her to go into a house in the city; and enquiring in the neighbourhood, he was informed that a young lady lived there, the favourite of an old rich merchant. Near the appointed time of meeting, Shakespear thought proper to anticipate Mr. Burbage, and was introduced by the concert-

ed

ed signal. The lady was very much surpris'd at Shakespear's presuming to act Mr. Burbage's part; but as he (who had wrote Romeo and Juliet) we may be certain did not want wit or eloquence to apologize for the intrusion, she was soon pacified, and they were mutually happy till Burbage came to the door, and repeated the same signal; but Shakespear popping his head out of the window, bid him be gone; for that William the Conqueror had reigned before Richard III.

Lowin, as Downs tells us, was the original Henry VIII. and, as he was taught it by Shakespear, must have done it to the greatest advantage. He afterwards became Sir William Davenant's favourite Actor; and from what that gentleman recollected of his performance, he instructed Mr. Betterton, who used often to acknowledge, that he was indebted for all the applause he had received in that character to Sir William's friendly hints.---Lowen was very excellent in Comedy, particularly in the characters of Morose, Volpone, Mamon, and Falstaff. In the latter part of his life, he kept the three pigeons, an inn in Brentford, and died in advanced age and great poverty, neglected.



lected and forgot by those in whom he had often delighted in his days of perfection. He is said to have been a favourite of Massinger, and one of the principal Actors in his Plays. In a copy of verses before the Tragedy of the Roman Actor, by Massinger, he pays the following compliment to the author:

*Then (gentle friend) I should not blush to bee  
Rank'd 'mongst those worthy ones, which here  
I see*

*Ushering this work, but why I write to thee  
Is to professe our loves antiquitie,*

*Which to this Tragedie must give my test,*

*Thou hast made many good, but this thy best.*

Joseph Taylor performed Paris the Tragedian in this Play. He is mentioned as an Actor of great merit; and was the original Hamlet of the author's instruction. Mr. Betterton was also instructed in this character by Sir William Davenant, who remembered Taylor; and to these hints was owing that he always performed it with uncommon applause. Taylor was also very excellent in Iago. The only comic characters which we learn of his performance, were

were True Wit in the Silent Woman, and Face in the Alchymist. The author of the Jew of Malta, says, that Mason (another great performer) and Taylor, performed their parts with excellence beyond conception : he died at Richmond. The high opinion which these two Actors were held in, may be inferred from these lines, in a Satyr against Ben Johnson.

*Let Lowin cease, and Taylor scorn to touch  
The loathed Stage since thou hast made it such.*

Allen, says Baker in his Chronicle, “ was as much valued for his honesty, as for his abilities in his profession.” He built a Theatre called the Fortune, acquired a good estate, and died in 1620. The following epitaph was intended for him,

*Here lies Edward Allen, the Roscius of his  
age, who, as he outacted all others, outacted  
himself before his death, by erecting Dulwich col-  
lege in Surry.*

We are told he designed this college for six men and six women, superannuated persons who belonged to the London Theatres, with six of their children ; but one of the managers refusing to admit a person to

be door-keeper whom he recommended, he converted his bounty another way, encreased the number of children to twelve, to be maintained and educated there from the age of four to fifteen, directed the governor should be a batchelor, and one of his own name, with a warden and four fellows. The college is a noble building, with a handsome chapel and elegant altar-piece, well painted, and a fine organ, with beautiful improvements.

The Jew of Malta is the only part in Tragedy, which, as far as we can learn, Allen appeared in; the Play written by Marloe, a cotemporary Actor with Shakespear. The author of the prologue to this Play, says thus of him,

*Whom we may rank with (doing no more wrong)  
Proteus for shape, and Roscius for a tongue.*

But Ben Jonson, who never praised injudiciously, and whose great favourite he was, pays him a much higher compliment:

*If Rome so great, and in her wisest age,  
Fear'd not to boast the glories of her Stage,  
As skilful Roscius, and grave Æsop, men,  
Yet crown'd with honours as with riches then,*

*Who had no less a trumpet of their name  
 Than Cicero, whose very breath was fame :  
 How can so great example die in me,  
 That Allen I shou'd pause to publish thee,  
 Who both their graces in thyself hast more  
 Outstript, than they did all that went before ;  
 And present worth in all doth so contract,  
 As others speak, but only thou dost act.  
 Wear this renown : 'tis just that who did give  
 So many Poets Life by one shou'd live.*

In a list of old dramatic pieces, we find one with this title : A Knack to know a Knave, 1594, several times acted by E. Allen, with Kempe's applauded merriments of the men of Gotham in receiving the King into Gotham.

Hemings and Condell were two celebrated Actors in Shakespear's, Johnson's, and Fletcher's Plays, the one in Tragedy, the other in Comedy ; but chiefly known for being the first editors of Shakespear, seven years after his death.

Greene was a famous low Comedian, and noted for his performance of Bubble, in a Comedy written by Cooke, who in compliment



to him, called it afterwards his *tu quoque*. Heywood says, there was not an actor of his nature in his time of better ability in his performance, more applauded by the audience, of greater grace at court, or of more general love in the city.

Kempe and Tarleton were eminent in their way of low comedy; and particularly excelled in the clowns. They were both favourites of queen Elizabeth and their audience: Kempe and Burbage were the Betterton and Nokes of their age; and Sir Richard Baker says of Tarleton, that he never had his match, nor never will have. His epitaph, preserved by Campden, is thus :

*Hic situs est, cujus actio vox, vultus possit,  
Ex Heraclito reddere Democritum.*

Robinson was esteemed a capital actor, and must have been truly so, as the famous Hart was formed by him. He was an actor of great merit, and one of the principal performers in Killigrew's company: he was noted for his performance of Othello, Brutus, and Alexander; in this last he appeared with such majesty and dignity, that one of the courtiers  
of

Of the first rank was pleased to say, he might teach any King on the earth how to comport himself. He also excelled in many parts of comedy, such as Manly, Plain Dealer, Horner in the Country Wife, Don John, Mosca, &c. Rhymer the critic says thus of him, That he always pleased, and what he delivered every one took upon consent; their eyes were prepossessed and charmed by his action, before aught of the poet's could approach their ears; and to the most wretched of characters he gave a lustre and brilliancy which dazzled the sight, and the deformities of the poetry could not be perceived. He was a royalist, and was killed at the battle of Basinghouse by one of the long-ear'd Phanatics, who, after he was taken prisoner, and had surrendered his arms, shot him through the head, saying, *Cursed is he that doeth the work of the Lord negligently.*

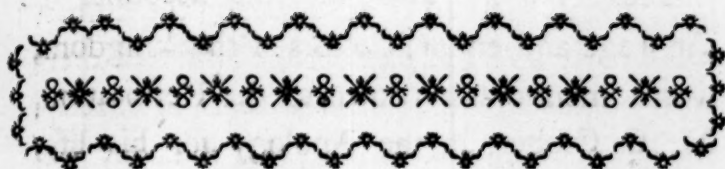
He performed the part of Messalina the Roman empress in a tragedy of that name, wrote by Richards in 1640, and has wrote a copy of verses on the author, which is printed before this play.

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These are the most material accounts of the stage and eminent actors of this kingdom, worth mentioning, down to the Restoration. Mr. C. Cibber, in the *Apology* for his life, has, in general, so judiciously drawn the characters of those who flourished from that time to his quitting the theatre, that it would be superfluous to mention them here. For those of the present performers, the reader is referred to the ensuing chapter.



PART



## P A R T IV.

A CRITICAL EXAMINATION of the Merits  
and Demerits of the principal Performers  
in England and Ireland.



### C H A P. I.

*An Address to Audiences.*

THE simplicity of nature is her choicest  
beauty ; to examine it with the eye of  
an unrivalled master ; to pluck the sweetest of  
her flowers ; to transplant them into his own  
garden ; to cherish and raise them to perfec-  
tion, which Nature herself could scarcely tran-  
scend, was a task to which the genius of Shake-  
speare only was equal. He knew the springs  
of all our affections, the source of every pas-  
sion,



sion, and its method of acting upon the human mind ; when he had explored, he painted them with boldness ; he delineated them so exactly, the assimilation was so nice, that the copy was scarcely to be distinguished from the original. Who is there that reads Clarence's dream in Richard the second, that does not see every image that he describes, and feel the effect which he attributes to it : his account of the struggles which he supposed himself to have with the waters before he was suffocated, is so striking ; the torments that he went thro' after death are so powerfully painted, that one would be almost apt to believe, that Shakespeare had passed by the channel of drowning to the regions of immortality, from whence, by some strange chance, he escaped back into life, like some of those visionaries whom we find mentioned in the Roman Martyrology and Venerable Bede. The best writers of the Drama, who have succeeded this great master, whether in the different provinces of serious or comic, are in comparison of him but twilight to sunshine.

To copy his manners, to catch his spirit, and illustrate his text, is a task to which

scarcely any actor was ever equal; he who is, must confessedly be allowed to stand among performers in a light as superior as Shakespear does among poets; and there is no body who has traced Mr. Garrick through all his walks but what will allow him deservedly the situation.

Nature has furnished him with great sensibility and fire, with a lively eye, not quite black, but extremely dark and piercing; his countenance taken altogether is strikingly marking; and no man is better able to suit his natural advantages to the different characters in which he appears. The perfection of his performance is sufficiently acknowledged by the repeated approbation of his audience. It would require more than a folio volume to describe the various excellencies which this gentleman displays in his cast of characters, whether tragic or comic. We shall pass some strictures upon his appearances in a few parts of each; and thence some idea of his merit may be fairly deduced. Perhaps it may be said, with as much justice as truth, that he is the greatest, if not the only actor who has appeared in Lear and Abel Drugger; Mac-

beth and Benedict; Hamlet and Sir John Brute; Chamont and Archer; Tancred and Ranger; Jaffeir and Bays; Lusignan and Lord Chalkstone. It would be difficult to determine which of the tragic characters we have mentioned require the strongest attributes; which of the comic stand in need of the greatest abilities.

His performance in Lear is certainly very capital; nor is it in man's power to vary the passions which actuate that character in a manner more striking. If it was the master-piece of Shakespeare to write, so is it the Chef-d'œuvres of Garrick to act: nor is there a beauty of the Play which he does not wonderfully illustrate; and thro' the whole his genius appears almost as powerfully creative as that of the Divine Author, from whose pen it dropped.

Whether we consider him seated upon his throne in fullness of a content, which he shares out with infinite complacency among his *pelican daughters*; raving at the affronts under which they lay him; drenched in the *pitiless storm*; exposed to all the fury of the heavens; or mad as the vexed winds; whether

ther we view him wearied *with vile crosses*; or at the last extremity, calling forth all the strength and spirits of an almost exhausted old man, to free himself from surrounding peril, and save his dear Cordelia, we must pronounce him inimitable. His knowledge of the passions, and their several methods of operating on the mind, are by him through the whole very properly marked. With what emphatic rage does he pronounce,

*Darkness and devils --- Saddle my horses;  
Call my train together.*

What heart of sensibility is there that does not swell with horror at the awful solemnity with which he utters the curse of,

*Blasts upon thee,  
Th' untented woundings of a father's curse  
Pierce every sense.*

How beautifully expressive appears the bitterness of his anger subsiding into a reflection on his own folly? how artfully does he endeavour to suppress the justly provoked tear, when he says,

*Old fond eyes,  
Lament this cause again, I'll pluck ye out,  
And*



*And cast ye with the water that ye lose  
To temper clay.*

His manner of conveying his feeling here, makes every other eye overflow; the alteration of his countenance from sensibility to madness; the foolish laugh, and indeed his whole performance of the mad part, must impress every body capable of the smallest tenderness. I never see him coming down from one corner of the Stage, with his old grey hair standing, as it were, erect upon his head, his face filled with horror and attention, his hands expanded, and his whole frame actuated by a dreadful solemnity, but I am astounded, and share in all his distresses; nay, as Shakespeare in some different place, with elegance, observes upon another subject, *one might interpret from the dumbness of his gesture.* Methink I share in his calamities, I feel the dark drifting rain, and the sharp tempest, with his

*Blow winds---'till you have burst your cheeks.*

It is here that the power of his eye, corresponding with an attitude peculiar to his own judgment, and proper to the situation, is of force sufficient to thrill through the veins,  
and

and pierce the hardest bosom. What superlative tenderness does he discover in speaking these words :

*Pray do not mock me ; for as I am a man,  
I take that lady to be my child Cordelia.*

His whole performance in the fifth act of this Play is inimitably graceful. The spirit which he exerts, the endeavouring to collect all his strength to preserve his dear daughter from the hand of the assassin, are not to be described. His leaning against the side of the scene, panting for want of breath, as if exhausted, and his recollecting the feat, and replying to the fellow who observes, that the good old King has slain two of them, *Did I not, fellow ?* have more force, more strength, and more propriety of character, than I ever saw in any other Actor. Nor, in saying this, let it be at all supposed, that I have the least design of detracting from the merits of Mr. Barry. It must be allowed, that he utters the imprecations against his children in a masterly manner ; and that he excels in many places where no great hurry of passion agitates the scene : but there is a vivacity, a strain of judgment, and a pleasing power of varying  
and

and keeping up the passions in Garrick, which Barry never can reach. It has been conjectured by a friend of mine, whose critical judgment I highly respect, that from Garrick's performance of the mad scenes in Lear, Gray, in his poem on Eaton college, borrowed the idea of

*Moody madness laughing wild.*

Shakespeare was always particularly careful in his characters, and in none more so than in Richard the Third ; whom history has represented as the poet has drawn, deformed, wicked, perfidious, splenetic, and ambitious : All these marks of the character are spiritedly preserved by Garrick in the part. In the first act we see in him all the settled malice of the murderer ; and after he kills the King, the unrelenting irony with which he views the blood upon his sword, is perfectly preserved. It is something astonishing, that when Cibber first brought his alteration of Richard the Third, in which he has shewn great abilities as a tragic writer, on the Stage, this Act was ordered by the licenser to be left out, lest it should remind people of drawing a comparison between the justly banished

James

James and the unfortunate Henry; which to do, in my opinion, required a large straining of judgment. However it has been for many years restored.

It is to be observed of this character, that wherever he speaks of his own imperfections, he shews himself galled and uneasy; and in one particular passage his drawing a parallel between himself and the rest of human kind, to all whom he finds himself unequal, determines him in villainy. *Then I am like no brother, &c.* Garrick in all these places shews by his acting the cross-grained splenetic turn of Richard the Third; he shews you how the survey hurts him: whereas I have seen some people here smile upon themselves, as if well pleased with their own appearance, in which that they were wrong, the performance of this masterly Actor confirms. In his courtship to Lady Anne, the dissimulation is so strong, that we are almost induced to think it real, and to wonder how such deformity could succeed with so much beauty. When Mr. Barry appeared in this character, for which I am not the only person that imagined him unfit, he was thought happy in this Scene; in which, however,



however, all his abilities could not set him on a level with this darling of nature; whose tone of voice is happily insinuating, his manner perfectly engaging. Perhaps his exquisite judgment is shewn no where to more advantage, than in the distinction he makes between the real and affected character of Richard the Third, particularly in that Scene of the Third Act, wherein, as has been before concerted, Buckingham, with the Mayor and Aldermen, persuade him to accept the crown. Let his demeanor be observed in each of these speeches, and the truth of this observation will be admitted.

When Buckingham leaves him in a passion, disgusted at his refusing the crown, Richard desires the Mayor to

*Call him again----*

*You will enforce me to a world of cares:*

*I am not made of stone,*

*But penetrable to your kind entreaties.*

What fire lights up his eye, what satisfaction glows in his countenance, when he thus expresses himself!

*Why now my golden dream is out;*

*Ambition, like an early friend, throws back*

*My*

*My curtains with an eager hand, o'erjoy'd  
To tell me what I dreamt is true---a crown, &c.*

Amidst all the discouraging tydings, which he receives in the latter end of the fourth Act; amidst all the bustle of repeated disappointment, he maintains the intrepidity and fire of the character in a manner which none but himself can sustain.

There is a fine contrast in the tenth Scene of the last Act, between the calm soliloquy spoken by Richard before he retires to his couch, and the horror with which he starts up and comes forward, after the ghosts have uttered their predictions, and retired, which Garrick never fails to illustrate. I do not recollect any situation in Tragedy in which he appears to more advantage than that in which he rises and grasps his sword before quite awake; nor could any thing afford a finer subject to a masterly painter than his manner of receiving Catesby. Mr. Hogarth, to whose comic powers I pay the utmost deference, has given us one representation of this in an engraved print, which is very common, but it does not do all that honor to this great painter which I could wish; for the figure  
taken

taken all together is not only much larger in proportion than the figure of Garrick, but one of the legs is projected much beyond its natural length: nor is this criticism of such a nature as that of an eminent scholar, who falsely accused Hogarth of introducing a cat playing with a mouse in his Paul preaching at Athens, which was never thought of. Had it been so, a ludicrous light must have been necessarily thrown over the picture. The gentleman, poorly indeed, excuses himself for this mistake by begging pardon, and saying, he had been told so. The case with us is different. We have just examined the print, which is well executed, and thence deduce our observation, which we shall conclude, with assuring Hogarth, that in our opinion he can hit upon no subject that will give a finer opportunity of displaying his genius than this, which all people of taste would be obliged to him for retouching, and giving a just representation of Garrick in this circumstance, and a picture equal to himself.

The terror which Garrick expresses in the scene in hand, upon the coming in of Catesby; and his recovering from that fright by degrees  
till

till he assumes the former spirit and intrepidity of the character, is a still stronger proof of his genius; and the passions that one would imagine such a character would feel when dying, are represented in a manner peculiar to the feelings of a Garrick. We have described him in two characters, those of an honest, well-meaning, ill-used old man, and that of a compound of villany, void of all human affections. Let us now proceed to examine him in some parts of a lover, on which we shall slightly touch.

## C H A P. II.

*Of Garrick's different Excellencies.*

VENICE Preserved is one of those few Plays which will always speak to the heart of the spectator, and never more so than when Mr. Garrick appears as Jaffeir. No man but he who has seen can ever conceive the additional beauties this soliloquy receives from his speaking:

*I've now not fifty ducats in the world;  
Yet still I am in love, and pleas'd with ruin.  
Ob Belvidera! Ob! she is my wife!  
And we will bear our wayward fate together,  
And ne'er know comfort more.*

R

The



The different passions which here agitate the soul of Jaffeir are plainly to be traced in the countenance of Garrick ; despair and dejection are so visible in his face, that every benevolent heart pants to relieve him, and pronounces,

*Oh Belvidera ! Oh, she is my wife !*

in a manner so pathetic, and so strongly affecting, that to hear him, and at the same time to stop the bursting tear, is impossible. This Scene is wrought up with wonderful art by the poet ; and as far as Garrick's performance relates to it, he seems to partake of equal spirit.

It is here that Pierre, with great subtilty, endeavours to rouse the languid spirit of Jaffeir, to animate him to revenge, by assuring him a reformation of the evils under which he laboured might, with resolution, be easily compassed. He then touches upon the distresses of his wife in a manner so artful, that he first melts him into tears, and then rouses him to vengeance at reminding him of the hardships and indignities under which a wife, on whom he doated, had labored. The wife is then admirably introduced ; and Mr. Garrick's expression

pression of all the soft sensations which such an incident would naturally excite, is equally admirable.

In the second Act Garrick takes the purse offered him by Pierre with all the seeming horror and detestation which a man of honor must naturally feel at such an offer; and it is now that I regret the use that is made of it, touched with Garrick's feelings, rather than those of Jaffair.

In the conclusion of this Act, where Jaffair delivers his wife up, as a pledge of his fidelity, to the care of Renault, Garrick's behaviour, while he speaks this speech,

*If I am false, accuse me; but if true,  
Don't, prithee don't, in poverty forsake me;  
But pity the sad heart that's torn with panting---  
Yet bear me---yet recal me---*

so fully displays love and despair struggling in his soul, that tho' we are angry with Jaffair for his ungenerous severity to his wife, we are obliged to pity sufferings so finely represented. In that part of the fourth Act, where Belvidera endeavours to work upon him, so as to

make him discover the conspiracy to the Senate, and procure the arrest of his new brethren, our great Actor's looks and performance are so admirably adapted, that from them only, were we strangers to the language, we might judge of her power over him, and in what manner he was impressed by her arguments : and he is here so very fine, that he can never fail to fill the eye with tears, and make every heart sympathize with the pangs which swell the heart of Jaffeir, whom we are now almost willing to excuse for his perfidy ; for we cannot but pity him for being liable to such temptation as can flow from the tongue of a Ciber, whose mellifluous tones are not less persuasive than his, than which nothing can be more pleasing or melodious.

In a few words, thro' the whole character of Jaffeir he gives us an exquisite picture of conjugal love and friendship : we never hear him mention his dear Belvidera, but in accents that are beautifully tender. The afflictions that he suffers for her seem none of them dissembled ; neither do I know any character where the miseries of a fond husband, a misguided friend, and a weak man, are so strongly

strongly drawn as by Otway in this Play, and by Garrick in his acting in it.

When we review the merits of this Play, and the Orphan, we cannot but regret, that we see no more of Otway's dramatic Performances; for his choice of subject is always judicious, his language tender, and his incidents striking. It is well known, that by his want of œconomy he was often obliged to apply to his friends for support; and he was so much in debt at the time of *Venice Preserved* being performed, that all the profits of it would not have silenced the clamours of his creditors, had not the Ducheſs of Portſmouth, to whom he dedicated it, made him a present of twenty guineas for the compliment. His constant friend, Mr. Betterton, and some others, made him up the like sum, and desired him to retire to Hampshire, as being a cheap country, and to write another Tragedy, which he promised to bring on the Stage the next season. Otway seemingly complied, left his lodgings, and retired to the country, as they thought: his friends were very uneasy at not hearing from him for some time, when in about three months they were informed, that



he had been seen in the outskirts of the town in a very mean garb. This they soon found to be true, on the receipt of some petitionary letters for a further supply, which they were too much displeased with him to answer. He had now no resource left but to apply to Mrs. Behn for the loan of five pounds, to enable him, as he termed it, to finish his play, which she generously advanced; but how agreeably was she surprised with the style and pathetic distress of four Acts of it almost finished, which he shewed her! In her judgment it was superior to any thing he had before written. The story was that of Iphigenia: she advised him to shew it to Mr. Betterton, adding, that she was sure it would compromise all differences. This his modesty declined, till he had completed the whole. It is probable that at this time he went to his lodgings on Tower-hill. However, Mrs. Behn acquainted Mr. Betterton with this interview, who immediately made all possible enquiry after him, till about a month afterwards he was informed of his death on Tower-hill. He soon enquired out his lodging, which he found to be with a poor woman in one of the blind alleys there, where he was further informed, that on the night he died,

died, a man, who used to visit him, had come into his room and taken away all his papers, with some few books he had remaining. Mr. Betterton did not neglect to make the strictest search after this person, but could never learn who he was that had deprived the world of this invaluable treasure. That Otway did leave a Play is very certain; and it is as certain, that the piece called Heroic Friendship, which was laid to his charge by a certain publisher, had no mark of his genius. This ornament to the Drama received the first rudiments of education at Winchester school, removed thence as a commoner to Christ Church, Oxon; a proof of his being a man of family. His character for learning was not greater at College than it was afterwards for courage in the army, he being some time an ensign. He was handsome and companionable; an idler and a sot; and he kept it up to the last; for one of his last compositions was a song in praise of punch, tho' at that time he wanted victuals. He left college, with a company of players, at a public Act in 1674. Elk. Settle left Queen's College at the same time, and they spouted together.

There is not any character in Tragedy so seldom hit off by the Actor as Macbeth, perhaps there are few more difficult ; and in the hands of Garrick it acquires an inconceivable ease. It is curious to observe in him the progress of guilt from the intention to the act. How his ambition kindles at the distant prospect of a crown, when the witches prophecy ! and with what reluctance he yields, upon the diabolical persuasions of his wife, to the perpetration of the murder ! How finely does he shew his resolution staggered, upon the supposed view of the air-drawn dagger, until he is roused to action by the signal, viz. the ringing of the closet bell !

It is impossible for description to convey an adequate idea of the horror of his looks, when he returns from having murdered Duncan with the bloody daggers, and hands stained in gore. How does his voice chill the blood when he tells you, “ I’ve done the deed !” and then looking on his hands, “ this is a sorry sight !” How expressive is his manner and countenance during Lenox’s knocking at the door, of the anguish and confusion that possess him ; and his answer, “ ’twas a rough night,”

night," shews as much self-condemnation, as much fear of discovery, as much endeavour to conquer inquietude and assume ease, as ever was infused into, or intended for, the character. What force, what uncontrollable spirit does he discover in his distresses, when he cries out,

*They have tied me to a stake---I cannot fly ;  
But bear-like I must fight my course.*

In short, he alone, methinks, performs the character.

As it is usual, with Shakespear particularly, in every place to seize the strongest likenesses that nature can furnish, to diversify every passion with exact colouring and propriety, and accurately to mark the different situations and predominant qualities of characters, so is it with Mr. Garrick to transfuse them thro' his whole performance : he delineates them so that they are seen by every eye ; nor is this virtue any where more plainly shewn than in Hamlet. The author has drawn this prince of a reserved cautious turn, arising from a melancholy stamped on him by his father's untimely death, and some consequent misfortunes. The  
passions



passions whereby he is actuated do not, except in a few places, rise to any height ; and to distinguish his feigned madness from his real provocation, is a master-piece which he hits off admirably. His manner of receiving his father's ghost on its first entrance has a fine mixture of astonishment, deference, and resolution ; and the recollection and reverence which Garrick preserves in speaking,

*Go on, I'll follow thee,*

as well as all thro' the next Scene, are by him better kept up than by any other Actor I have seen in this character. In the Closet Scene with his mother, where Hamlet says, " he will speak daggers to her, but use none," he preserves a proper air of filial affection amidst the most bitter reproaches, until it gives way to the awe and surprize that must naturally arise from the re-appearance of the ghost, who

*Comes to whet his almost blunted purpose.*

His real tenderness for Ophelia, and his ineffectual endeavours to hide it, are distinctions which he is as nice in conveying as the poet was in drawing. All thro' the character of Romeo I think him at least equal to any one who ever performed ; and where other passions

sions besides love are to be displayed, he is vastly superior. This is evinced particularly in the last-act; his transition from the settled satisfaction of his presages, to silent horror and despondency, on receiving the news of Juliet's death; that despair which he ever after maintains thro' the character, are as strong proofs as any I know of his judgment and abilities. The attitude into which he throws himself, when disturbed by Paris in the church-yard, is very striking; and which was stolen from him by a certain performer, who owed to his instruction many, if not most of the strokes on which was founded his great reputation in Romeo. In the dying scene of this play he is particularly happy; his manner of expressing this single line,

*Parents have flinty hearts, and children must  
be wretched,*

carries with it so much of that sort of frenzy which is proper to Romeo's melancholy situation, and it is delivered in a tone so affecting, so different from any thing we before heard him express, that it makes one's blood run cold; and I dare say there is not a person that hears this line spoken by him, and who can charge

charge himself with any parental neglect, that will not feel remorse, and shudder.

The various lights which he throws on Chamont are a fine illustration of an open-hearted generous soldier, tender of the honor of his house, impetuous, violent, unartful, and liable to slight imposition. All these ingredients he distinguishes properly thro' the Scene of his sister's complaint of Castalio's tenderness, till the flame bursts out in,

*What, throw thee from him, &c.*

*So may this arm throw him to the earth,*

*Like a dead dog, despised.*

*Lameness and leprosy, blindness and lunacy,*

*Shame, pride, poverty, and the name of villain*

*Light on me, Castalio, if I forgive thee.*

His passion even discharges itself on the good old Acasto ; and his sudden transition from rage to respect, on remembering his obligations, breaks out finely in softer tones here ;

*Ha ! Is not that the good old Acasto ?*

*Can you forgive me, Sir ; indeed I've been to blame.*

and thro' the whole character he nicely distinguishes the delicate sense of his own horror,

ror, of resentment excited by the injuries he supposes his sister to have sustained, his tenderness for her, his struggle between gratitude to Acasto and hatred to Castalio, and his love for Serina; all which by turns fill the breast of Chamont.

In the Roman Father he finely paints his anger and concern for the suspected cowardice of his son, which is contrasted by the mixture of joy and surprise of,

*Pretended flight! and this succeeded, ha!*

*Oh glorious boy!*

in a manner that fully deserves that applause with which it is always crowned.

Lothario is too often exhibited like a modern buck, whose appetites, as to women and wine, have no bounds; but this is only part of his character: he is moreover a man of noble blood, large fortune, and bears

*As great a name as the proud city (Venice)  
boasts of.*

which Mr. Garrick takes care to mark by a spirit and deportment peculiar to nobility.

Thus



Thus have we endeavored to give a sketch of his vast abilities in Tragedy, by pointing out a few places in some principal characters in which he is remarkably well : there are others of an inferior nature, such as Lufignan in Zara ; the sick King in the second part of Henry the Fourth ; in which he displays equal merit ; and which make us regret, that we do not oftener see him in short parts, wherein the particular passion, as in each of these, is strongly marked ; for let a character be of a nature ever so inferior, his playing it must render it capital. Nor is it only to Tragedy that the merits of this great Actor are confined ; for in a comic cast he has as much propriety and humour as in a tragic he has strength and expressive passion ; and in whatever light he is considered, his genius must be allowed universal, his performance inimitable. In both, nature commixed is his constant guide and study, and never turns the Actor into the buffoon, by stepping beyond his bounds.

The passions in Comedy never rise beyond common life ; and his exquisite judgment is to be admired for not only bestowing on them all the coloring requisite, without deviating  
from

from rectitude, but running thro' each with the most consummate ease. In Archer, for example, he is the footman, the gallant, and the gentleman by turns: his addressee to Cherry are easy and jocular; with Mrs. Sullen he is polite and unaffected, particularly in the Gallery scene, where the gentleman's education ought to shine upon the manners of the footman; and he talks of pictures and mythology. He is perfectly happy in wishing Aimwell joy of his marriage; his changing to repentment and despondency on finding himself disappointed; and his sudden transition to content and satisfaction on finding that his friend is really a lord. All the world speaks of him with admiration in Bays, which, tho' a particular and confined satire, his performance of it is such, that the satire becomes generally striking and pleasing.

The humour of the character is obvious to the judicious; but these are a class of mortals no more to be found always among the Actors than the Audiences. I have seen the delicate sarcasms of it, the refined irony confined by an injudicious performer, with low buffoonery and vile farce; and this as much for want of judgment

ment as to provoke the laugh of the *million*. No body is ignorant, that this was intended originally for a man of quality, one of the wits of easy Charles's reign, I think it was a Howard, but changed by the illustrious author to a sneer upon Dryden, whose very dress was copied by Estcourt. This Play first appeared in 1683, and levelled particularly at Dryden, to revenge the severity of the character of Zimri in Absalom and Achitophel, wherein are these two lines :

*He, in the course of one revolving moon,  
Was chymist, fidler, statesman, and buffoon.*

No great compliment to a Duke of Buckingham, and a bitter pill to a courtier, as being truth.

Cibber, who afterwards played this part with applause, copied the dress of Tom. Durfey. Mr. Garrick's is levelled at no particular person, but a whimsical unfashionable compound, extremely laughable, and still more so, when one compares it with the importance, the consequence, which he affects to maintain. His contempt for Mr. Smith's judgment ; his astonishment and uneasiness at the players being

being gone to dinner. Indeed his performance through the whole, is fine satire and finished comedy: It is not unlikely that he may have collected many of his masterly strokes from a few of such unfortunate authors, who, without wit or judgment, are perpetually buzzing about him with productions fraught with wretchedness.

It is almost impossible for us to reconcile to ourselves, that one and the same person should vary from the sprightly Lothario, and the princely Hamlet, to the mean Tobacco-boy; yet in Abel Drugger he is as inimitable as in the other two. The stupid confusion which he shews at breaking the urinal, and his satisfaction at going out without its being taken notice of, are peculiar to himself. The introducing this incident was first owing entirely to accident. It happened to old Cibber, who was allowed to play this character well. He, while the other personages were employed, rather than stand idle, was fiddling about the table of the Alchymist; and by way of filling up time, took up the urinal, and held it to the light, when it by chance slipping through his fingers, broke to pieces; and he had presence of mind



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to put on an air of distress happy to the time and the place; it told to admirable purpose. He played the part afterwards as usual; but the audience obliged him to restore the accidental addition; and it has been ever since retained by every other performer. Abel Drugger is certainly the standard of low comedy; and Mr. Garrick's playing it the standard of acting in this species of comedy.

How beautifully does he paint the jealousy of common life in Kitely, in "Every Man in his Humour." The anxiety and fears here natural to the part, and the awkward endeavour at disguising the ruling passion, are capital, both in the poet and the player, particularly where the husband unawares drops it that he has been,

*-----pointed at as one*

*Disturbed with jealousy.*

Dame Kitely. *Why were you ever jealous?*

Kite. *What?--ha! never! never! ha, ha, ha!*

*She stabs me home!---Jealous of thee!*

*No, do not believe it---Speak low, my love.*

Garrick's laugh here is, as his wife afterwards expresses it, "Seemingly without mirth, constrained,

strained, and affected to the utmost." His supposed detection of old Knowell, in an intrigue with his wife, at Cob's house, is a scene which would make an exceeding good picture. In a few words here, before the justice, and, indeed, through the whole part, he shews a deep knowledge of the human heart; and it is equal to any acting that ever was seen.

Though it is a jealous character, and fundamentally similar to Don Fælix in the Wonder, he throws it into a very different light; and thereby marks out very properly the varieties of the passion of jealousy; but very justly distinguishes the manner of its operating upon the merchant and the nobleman.

There is in Benedict, in *Much Ado about Nothing*, an agreeable display of wit and humour, which, under his management, gives us a most lively picture of the gaiety and sprightliness of the poet's age. Beatrice and he are very good counter parts. The eager solicitude of his look, while he is attending to a conversation on himself, is perfectly comic; so it is in his soliloquy, wherein he so

gravely reasons himself into a resolution of falling in love with her, and the self-flattering air he assumes on her speech to him, "If I don't pity her, I'm a villain, &c." Let these be compared with his spirited raillery against matrimony, and we shall see the different beauties of each in their true light.

In Ranger he is particularly happy. This is a sprightly young templar, carried away by a fashionable relish for the vices and follies of the town; and he has had a sufficiency of loose originals from whom to copy, neither has he spared them.

There are many other characters besides these just cited, wherein he shews the greatest excellencies; and several more, to which, were he to attempt them, he would do the greatest justice. I have heard one of the best judges of the Drama I ever knew, say, that if he were to perform Shylock only, it would surpass all his other characters, to which I might add Cassius, Fainwel, and Atall. The first, by all accounts, has not been done justice to since the days of Verbruggen; and in the two last he could change the voice and deportment so as to absolutely

olutely deceive the audience : whereas all that I have seen in this character make this change only to consist in the dress.

This he could not effect, but for his talents of extending his observation to every station, and extracting from every thing that can add to the imitation of nature, or give life to his performance. Nothing can more fully evince the truth of this affirmation than a review of a short part, written by himself, as well as acted, with astonishing accuracy ; I say astonishing, for such will it appear to be to those who have at Bath and the Watering-places been conversant with originals of it. This is Lord Chalkestone, an old debauchee of quality, who, in spite of his being crippled by the gout, and oppressed by a complication of disorders, will not change his profuse course of life, each day of which is sacrificed to dissoluteness and irregularity : his manner of walking, acting, and speaking it, is to us one of the highest entertainments of the theatre we ever enjoyed. Never, do I believe, did an Actor live before Garrick, who had it in his power to raise all that is risible in us, by the most masterly strokes of humour, or of warm-



ing, moving, and affecting us with the most natural distress. Future times will scarcely credit the amazing contrast between his Lear and School Boy, or his Richard and his Fribble: nor can the best judges determine whether he is greatest in the Sock or Buskin; yet in each they must allow him excellent. We shall conclude the character of this Æsopian Roscius with observing, that he gives us not resemblances, but realities; that he does not exhibit, but create; in him we view as actions what we only admire in others as representations. There is in his performance true dignity of expression; his figures, where his subject gives him scope, are noble beyond imagination; his attitudes are with justice appropriated to the sensations whereby they are supposed to be inspired; and his coloring, to borrow a metaphor from painting, is the highest we ever did or ever must expect to see. With all the softness and elegance of his imagery, there is a glow of fire and freedom, that at once surprises and charms the attentive spectator: and I am of opinion that he excels all his predecessors, as he does all his contemporaries in the power of shewing the distinguishing touches that separate passion from  
passion;

passion; thence is he able to unite in his performance the greatest spirit and exactest truth. If he has his faults, they are like spots in the sun, hid beneath a blaze of majesty; an effulgence of beauty that astonishes, while it dims all things liable to censure, so that they become imperceptible.

### CH A P. III.

*Of Woodward, Mossop, &c.*

**I**F frequent peals of laughter be a test of merit, Mr. Woodward deservedly enjoys the favour of the town, and maintains it through the variety of comic characters in which he appears. In his designing he is singular and shining, but often incorrect: if he has not ease, he has a manner that stands in the place of it; and let him be ever so deficient, he never displeases, his performance being happily calculated to catch the eye at first sight, and supported by a vivacity, joined to a genteel well-made figure, that never fails to make a proper impression, and bias his auditors in his favor. In Socia he is extremely happy; and Bobadil, by which he has acquired a vast increase of reputation, is a part of his own

creation, and a proof of his genius. The true bully is well displayed in his treading on master Stephen's sword, with, *This a toledo! pist!* and his manner of repeating the speech beginning with,

*I would select, &c.*

is admirable characteristic, and entirely original: indeed these are epithets which justly belong to him through the whole character. Nor has he less merit in Duretete. His behaviour, when shut up among the women, is truly admirable. I cannot say so much for his Scrub, which is rather too grotesque; and yet, methinks, he might find Scrubs enough in nature from whom to copy: but if he is here a little mistaken, in Tom in the Confiscious Lovers, and Lissardo in the Wonder a Woman keeps a Secret, he makes up sufficiently for the defect.

His anxiety in the former of these characters for a master, whom he is supposed to love, being in danger; his endeavouring to prevent the quarrel between him and his friend; and his confusion when he has, in the latter part, been coquetting with the two maids, and is  
called

called by his master, who he is afraid will discover him, are fine comic exhibitions, and draughts from nature. I know not a great deal of Woodward in private; but he has often given me pleasure, vast pleasure in public. He gave Falstaff much too old an appearance, yet a levity of deportment irreconcilable to fat Jack. He is well in the Busy Body; the eager curiosity of his look, when he apprehends a secret in agitation, and his penitential behaviour when he finds he has made a blunder in the discovery of it, are as truly comic as his ridiculous timidity in the last act.

The characters of Flash in Miss in her Teens, and the Fine Gentleman in Lethe, he illustrates with so many different strokes of humour, that it is hard to say, whether in the boasting cowardice of the one, or the affected elegance of the other, he most excels. In those of Touchstone, Brass, Beau Mizen, Mercutio, and Trapolin, he is unrivalled. The latter in his hands is indeed a most laughable character.

Mr.



Mr. Woodward will, I am sure, forgive me, if I tell him, he forgets to make a proper distinction between the different kinds of fops in which he appears. For example: The Foppington, of the Careless Husband, is a man of quality, taste, and good sense; but carried away by youthful conceit and self-sufficiency. His manner and deportment ought to differ from that of Witwoud, the clerk, who served his time to honest Purple Nose, the attorney, in Furnival's Inn. Neither is Clody, in the Fop's Fortune, the same with Jack Meggot. Yet, upon the whole, I must say, his acting is spirited and vivacious. He has judgment that enables him to dash, with unexpected strokes of humour, things dull in themselves; and he often throws over his performance an air of originality that imposes on the spectator, and gives to the performance the appearance of reality.

Mr. Moslop has been justly allowed merit as a Tragedian. He is a good scholar; and understands his author perfectly well; but he does not meliorate his exhibition. His voice is one of the finest in the world, but he strains it to an unaccountable harshness; so  
that,

that, like a Cremona fiddle in bad hands, it sends forth sounds that it was never made to produce. I think he has reformed of this lately, as well as of his aukward action; for I own his left-hand has often given me great uneasiness.

Zanga is said to be this gentleman's master-piece: there is a gloom, a solemnity in it, which he happily supports, and a spirit of revenge, which he conveys from the beginning to the end; so that even Quin's warmest admirers have given him the preference. In the speaking of the whole part he is, as indeed in most others, nicely emphatical: the fourth act particularly he supports with a proper spirit of dissimulation; and all the seeming honesty of the Moor happily intermixes in his manner of telling Alonzo the story of Leonora's meeting with Carlos. His pause, when Alonzo falls, before he pronounces these lines,

*Groan on, and with the sound refresh my soul;  
'Tis thro' his heart, his knees smite one another,*

is very graceful. The time that he takes is a good comment on the passage that expresses his feeling the gratification of his enmity, in the over-

overthrow of his conqueror : he uses a tone that is deep, and not too high, and delivers the sentence out of Alonzo's hearing. I have seen an actor eminent for judgment here hang over his patron, and thunder in his ear with a voice loud enough to have awakened the dead.

Mr. Mossop is, in the last scene of this play, very masterly : his transition from low servile flattery to a voice expressive of satisfied revenge, in

*Born for your use ; I live but to oblige you.*

*Know then---'twas I----*

is strikingly marked. But methinks I saw him once throw a new light on the speaking of the last hemistich : he pronounced it in a tone fraught with malice, fully expressive of gratified revenge ; he clenched both his fists, threw himself forward, and, with a ghastly grin, delivered it full in the teeth of the distressed Alonzo : in short, he divested himself of the noble deportment

*Of a prince whom kings had followed, and a  
people lov'd ;*

and displaying nothing but the malice of an

injured slave: but though I thought him wrong, the acting was fine, and gave me pleasure. This happened about two years since; I dare say Mr. Mossop's judgment has led him to lay this mode aside. I am sure he ought, if he remembers that Zanga is a prince, whose person has been disgraced by a vile blow, who had no way of restoring himself to himself but by revenge; that revenge was to him a kingdom, and as such he meant to enjoy it; however, let him speak it as he will, his voice is well calculated to have a fine effect.

Were he to take less pains, both in enunciation and action, particularly in Horatio in the Fair Penitent, he would find it turn to account; in the scene of advising Calista, and fighting with Altamont, he supports the character well. In Osmyrn, in the Mourning Bride, in the first act, wherein he is brought in prisoner, his countenance and comportment strongly indicated the passions of his mind; and in his manner of replying to the King, who questions him as to the reason of his gloominess, there was a proper mixture of rage, grief, and contempt for the person by whom



whom he was addressed. Though tenderness is not his fort, in the scenes with Almeria, he had a sufficiency; and his confusion on being discovered with her by Zara, was kept up with well-marked propriety.

Had he more weight, and he would have more if he endeavoured at less, he would excel in Pierre; and, indeed, through the whole, he is capital. I except his manner of speaking these lines to Jaffeir, when they are brought face to face before the senate:

*These boary traitors, Jaffeir, call us all villains.  
Art thou one, my friend?*

Mr. Mossop pronounces those words as if he suspected, that his friend was a traitor, which the whole tenor of the part contradicts; and besides, it is a mode of speaking that throws a blemish on Pierre greater than he ought to be laden with. Let us consider him as a man above suspicion, and we shall compassionate him the more: besides, it is a fine contrast to see an honest unsuspecting friend with arms extended to embrace the man by whom he was betrayed; does it not enhance our regard for the one, our contempt  
4 for

for the other? In the remainder of this scene, however, he has justly acquired much reputation. How truly does he look that contempt for all around him, which the speeches imply? How nobly does he refuse the offers of life which are made him, and reminds Jaffeir (who on his knees implores forgiveness, and begs him to live) of his falsehood; of the services he had done him, and the perfidy wherewith he repaid him? Here he supports so well the sentiment and situation of Pierre, that to hear and not to admire, as well as feel for his misfortunes, and despise their author at the same time, is impossible. From the characters I've seen him attempt in Comedy, I cannot think he will meet with very great success; for he has not as yet acquired that sprightly *degagée* air, that familiar elocution, which is essential to it. Upon the whole, he is a very valuable performer; and from the quick improvement he has already made, we have reason to hope, the little blemishes which attend him now, will soon wear off, and that we shall yet see him a finished Actor.

If humour, propriety, and a close adherence to nature, render a man valuable in the theatrical

trical world, Mr. Yates claims eminent distinction. His Brainworm was no less a master-piece than Woodward's Bobadil; nay, if we consider the various powers it required to support differently the serving-man, the disbanded soldier, the justice's clerk, and the varlet of the city or bailiff, and how he excelled in each, in all, we shall perhaps rank him next to Kitley. I never saw so good a Ben in my life. His Sir Francis Wronghead, his Sir Wilful Witwou'd, and his Lying Valet, are still stronger proofs of his abilities. There is not a more useful, nor a more pleasing performer now in Drury-lane than him. His judgment and experience teach him never to overshoot the mark, but to keep nature always in view. I never thought him so wrong as when he invaded the province of another performer of acknowledged talents, who is incomparable. Every body, without being directed thereto, will name Mr. Foote, who is an excellent Comedian, and has uncommon merit in many characters, especially in those of his own writing; to which he gives the highest colouring: these being copied rather from the oddities of nature, lose several of those diverting particularities, which we admire in his performance,

when

when attempted by any other. His audiences have been always highly entertained with his performance of Fondlewife, and Sir Paul Pliant: this is a cast in which he is happy in exerting his judgment, and displaying his admirable talents for humor; the latter part is, in his hands, a new creation. With him it appears in a light very different from any thing that I had ever seen presented by any other actor. He renders the ridicule of it so striking, without trick or grimace, that he not only commands the applause of the judicious, but of the *million*. In the third Act he keeps up finely all the awe in which Sir Paul stands of his wife. His admiration of her wit and person here, where she compliments Mr. Careless, and his silent action, as well as his humorous manner of throwing in half lines of rapture and affection, add considerably to the scene. His performance in the fourth Act of this Play is true Comedy; his reading of the letter is masterly; and his change of looks from despondency to joy, at supposing lady Pliant's excuse true, and the whole of what is past a contrivance of Careless to abuse him, is easy, natural, and spirited, and free from any strokes of mimicry: it is nature finely



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copied. A Stoic would burst with laughter to see the air of gravity and wisdom which he assumes, when Careless advances to inform him of his proceeding with his lady, and his only saying---*Indeed---Well, Sir---I'll dissemble with him a little---*so strongly indicate Sir Paul's views; his hope of catching Careless in a lye; his subsequent satisfaction at being deceived; and his manner of going off, are just, spirited, in character, and in nature. From considering him in this, and other characters, we must allow, that his talents are not confined to mimicry, as malice would insinuate, nor yet to his own pieces.

Mr. Berry is an Actor who stands well in the characters of Sciolto, Acasto, Old Capulet, King Henry in Richard, and others of this kind, and is much superior to any I have seen. He keeps nature generally in view, in the expressions of paternal fondness, but sometimes does more than she requires in his excessive grief. He has the art, known but by few on the stage, of diversifying his old men: his Adam in *As You Like It*, is genuine nature in a low sphere. It is a praise to his judgment that he preserves a proper dignity in  
the

the grief of King Henry, &c. I have seen him also in Comedy acquit himself to general satisfaction, principally in Boniface, Caliban, and Serjeant Kite in the Recruiting Officer; a character the hint of which was furnished by a serjeant in the regiment to which Farquhar belonged, and with whom he was a great favourite.

His real name was Jones. Once, when he was sent into England to recruit, he fell into company, at Chester, with a brother-serjeant, who informed him, that he had met with pretty good success, having enlisted fourteen recruits for his regiment, in Yorkshire. This information was enough for Jones, who, instead of beating up for volunteers as he had intended, took the first opportunity of insinuating himself into the acquaintance of the fellows whom his brother-serjeant had recruited; and, by his agreeable drollery and humorous songs, became so acceptable to them, that they, one and all, agreed to leave their own serjeant in the lurch, and go over with him to Ireland; which they did. A complaint of this odd kind of robbery was made to the Duke of Ormond, then Lord Lieutenant, who immediately

mediately ordered him into custody. Mr. Farquhar, hearing of his disaster, applied in his behalf to his Grace, with whom he was very intimate, and gave so large a character of his humorous abilities, that he soon obtained his enlargement; and some time after he had the honour of entertaining his Grace to such good purpose, that when he dismissed him, he gave him a handsome purse, and a promise of a commission. The many tricks he had played procured him the nick-name of Kite ever after.

We may say, that if Mr. Berry is not the greatest actor, he is at least a very useful one: a character which may also stand for Mr. Blakes, whose industry and desire to please, joined to his being always perfect, ought to stand in the place of talents. He is the best mimic of a Frenchman I ever saw.

Mr. Palmer's agreeable person bespeaks our approbation almost at first sight: his merit in several parts of Comedy confirms it, particularly in True Wit, Colonel Briton, &c. where he has a good deal of spirit, which, with a little more freedom in his manner, may make him  
a good

a good Plume, or Mirabel. But I would recommend to him to quit the Buskin ; for though he is a just speaker, yet he is apt sometimes to run into a puerility of tone, which quite enervates his performance : however, his daily improvements encourage us to hope, that he has not reached his utmost perfection.

Mr. Holland's first appearance was in Oroonoko, in which he gave great hopes of one day proving a valuable member of the theatrical community. He has not disappointed our expectations. We have beheld him daily improve. He performed Hamlet in a manner that merited the approbation with which he was received. There is great tenderness in his Dorilas ; and I think he must cut a very good figure in a serious cast in Comedy. His figure is agreeable ; his features well proportioned, and pleasingly disposed. Some tones of his voice, which is not strong, remind us of that of Mr. Garrick, which it resembles ; from whence some people have maliciously affirmed, that he is parrotted in every thing. It is certain, Mr. Garrick's judgment leads him to hint many fine strokes to his performers ; and I suppose Holland has sufficient good sense to



make a proper use of them among the rest. In the mean time, let it be observed, that this performer has genius ; and that, if he had not, Garrick has other use to make of his time than to dedicate it intirely to the forming of one man, Holland, upon the whole, is always perfect ; he knows what he is about ; he can taste the essence of a part ; and though he is not ambitious of appearing in a capital cast, he always fills it to advantage. The story of his being a baker is false.

Mr. Havard's agreeable figure and good understanding always give elegance and propriety to every part he undertakes. In Edgar he hits off the mad part admirably ; and under all the appearance of rags and poverty you can see the gentleman. He is very well in Sir Charles Easy, Manly, the Friar in Romeo and Juliet, and generally in all characters of a genteel grave cast : if he fails in any, he is readily excused for the great merit of his private character.

Since those great ornaments of the stage, Mrs. Porter and Mrs. Oldfield were no more, the lovers of the Drama were apprehensive,  
that

that they should never see their equals in tender or majestic distress again; but since Mrs. Cibber's appearance, those fears are removed, and all the excellencies of each are revived in her. The great sensibility she has derived from nature, her exquisite art and judgment, directs her to give to every passion its full colouring and expressiveness, even beyond our idea. Would she charm us into the most affecting distress, with the woes of a Juliet, or Belvidera, then

*Her looks-----*

*Draw audience and attention still as night,*

*Or summer's noon-tide air.*

MILTON.

'till our hearts have caught the pleasing infection, and our eyes confess it in tears.

Were she to confine herself barely to such tender scenes as these, we could not even then sufficiently admire her; but how are we surprised at the wild exertion of her powers in the sudden transitions she makes from love and grief to the extremities of rage and despair! and how different is her Juliet from her Alicia! and yet how justly does she feel in both, without exceeding the bounds of nature, or infringing upon female delicacy in either?

The musically plaintive tone of her voice gives a surprising softness to her love-characters; and her great skill in the passions never fails to direct her in the application of that, and her commanding features to be every way expressive of the poet's idea.

A short sketch of a few of her characters may give us some faint idea of her excellence.

In her Juliet we are charmed with all the innocence of youth and beauty, influenced by love. How simple, yet how tender and natural, is her conversation with Romeo in the garden scene!

*Thou know'st the mask of night is on my face,  
Else wou'd a maiden blush bepaint my cheek  
For that which thou hast heard me speak to night.  
Fain wou'd I dwell on form; fain, fain deny  
What I have spoke---but farewell, compliment;  
Dost thou love me?---&c.*

How different is this fond, this joyous scene from that wherein she hesitates to take the poison, anticipating in imagination the terrors of the Charnel-House, which yet her love overcomes.

*Romeo, I come---This do I drink to thee.*

The

The agonies of grief and despair, mingled with love, which she shews in the last act, rise beyond description; and she only is Shakespear's Juliet.

The slightest materials in the hands of an artist, receive new beauty and lustre. Thus, when Ophelia says,

*I wou'd give you some violets, but they wither'd  
all when my poor father died;*

Mrs. Cibber utters it with such sweet simplicity, and artless grief, as never fails of drawing tears from her audience.

In Belvidera she gives fresh strength to this most amiable picture of conjugal affection:

*Oh, I will love thee, even in madness love thee:  
Tho' my distracted senses should forsake me,  
I'd find some intervals, when my poor heart  
Shou'd'swage itself, and be let loose to thine.*

Her distresses in parting with Jaffeir are most natural and affectingly set forth. How melancholy and plaintive is her voice in these few words!

*Bequeath me something---Not one kiss at parting!  
Oh my poor heart, when wilt thou break!*

That



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That heart must be insensible indeed which is not affected with her maternal tenderness in Andromache :

*-----My swoln heart is full---  
I have a thousand farewells for my son,  
But tears break in---and interrupt my speech, &c.*

What variety and force of expression are in her Alicia. In this character she shews her unlimited genius, and gives the different passions their proper force. Rage and scorn are painted by her in the strongest light in the first scene of the second act with Hastings.

*Dost thou in scorn  
Preach patience to my rage? &c.*

In the last scene of the fourth, act how beautiful is her transition from rage to grief !

*Oh yet before I go for ever from thee,  
Turn thee in gentleness and pity to me, &c.*

When she finds the fatal effects her jealousy produced, she rises into all the extremities of rage, grief, and despair, which terminate in madness. The last scene is allowed to be her master-piece. Her face, her looks, every attitude, are strongly expressive of her inward conflicts.

With

With what supreme contempt does she spurn away Jane Shore in these words !

*And dost thou come to me for bread ?*

*I know thee not---Go---hunt for it abroad.*

How strongly afterwards does she paint her own wretchedness to her !

*I'll give thee misery, for here she dwells :*

*This is her house where the sun never dawns.*

till the dismal reflection quite overwhelms her.

*'Tis fall'n ! 'tis here ! I feel it on my brain.*

Then what a haggard wildness usurps her looks ; they are armed with all the symptoms of madness, rage, and despair. One would think that the *horrid, headless trunk* of Hastings was actually skimming before her.

These few examples may give us an idea of her great excellence in many other characters in Tragedy, such as Constance, Monimia, Sigismunda, Calista, and Isabella in the Fatal Marriage, in the distresses of which she is indeed incomparable.

To say no more, she has so much the air of an original in her performance, that all  
who

who appear in the same characters after her, seem but faint and languid copies.

Mrs. Pritchard is an Actress of extensive abilities, both in Tragedy and Comedy. She fills the stage well, her appearance is commanding, and her middle voice clear, intelligible, and melodious. It is not so well when she endeavours to raise to the expression of rage or horror; nor yet in pity or tenderness do we feel it efficacious; yet her manner and meaning sufficiently compensate for this defect. No woman supports better the dignity of Tragedy. I never observed her to descend into the familiar in the Queens of Hamlet or Merope; in the latter she preserves such a majesty of grief and maternal distress for her son Eumenes, as always highly affects and pleases. Her Hermione is a master-piece in its kind. It would be difficult to say, what variety and justness she observes in the expression and transition of every passion in this character; and to determine in which she is most excellent would be a very hard task.

With what a commanding mien does she appear; and at the same time how variously

and justly does she adapt every tone and motion to each passion, when she pronounces the following speech !

*That love, that constancy, so ill requited,  
Upbraids me to myself : I blush to think  
How I have used him, and wou'd shun his presence.*

*What will be my confusion when he sees me,  
Neglected and forsaken like himself ?  
Will he not say, Is this the scornful maid,  
The proud Hermione, that tyrannized  
In Sparta's court, and triumph'd in her charms ?  
Her insolence at last is well repaid---  
I cannot bear the thought.*

Her eyes sparkle with all the fire of keen resentment and slighted love. When Phyrrius rejects her, she says,

*Be gone ! the priest expects you at the altar---  
But, tyrant, have a care I come not thither.*

Maternal distress was never more finely or truly painted than by her in the Queen's parting with her children in the fourth act of Richard the Third. How pathetically does she mourn over them !

*Oh*



*Oh my poor children! Oh distracting thought!  
 I dare not bid them (as I should) farewell;  
 And then to part in silence stabs my soul.*

It would be endless to enumerate the variety of characters in which she has succeeded in Comedy: her talents in it are general. In Beatrice, Clarinda, and all characters of that cast, the engaging archness and pleasantry of her aspect, fully realizes the poet's idea, and leaves us nothing more to wish for; and we even forget her size, which is not quite proper for a coquet. In a word, every beauty she displays is the result of an uncommon genius, improved with the utmost art.

The rapid progress which Miss Macklin has made since her first appearance is a proof both of her genius and industry. Her talents seem turned for Comedy; though I have seen her in some scenes of Tragedy wherein she has been capitally great, particularly Almeria.

In some scenes of Lady Townly she has shewn that courtly elegance which has been long wanting on our Stage. She has a genteel figure and significant countenance, with such a grace in her deportment as must always  
 make

make her appear to the greatest advantage in genteel Comedy. In Silvia, Jacintha, and characters which require her appearance in men's cloaths, she has a freedom and ease much superior to any performer now on the Stage; and if her improvement continues, we may expect in a short time to see her one of the most finished performers on the Stage.

Miss Pritchard is rather low, but her figure is extremely elegant: there is great softness, good sense, and understanding displayed in her Juliet; and I have seen her perform the dying Scene as well as I ever desire to see it. If her mother is fine in Lady Macbeth's sleep, so is this young lady in the tomb-scene of Romeo: if her mother excels in Lady Touchwood, so does she in Lady Betty Modish; and I know nobody on the Stage that has so much of the deportment about her of the woman of quality.

I believe that of all Actresses who have appeared in the comic vein, Mrs. Clive's superior talents have always been pre-eminent. Notwithstanding the lavish encomiums which have been bestowed on the late Mrs. Bicknell and Mrs. Mountfort; yet those who recollect them,

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and have compared the merits of each with those of Mrs. Clive, are unanimously agreed in giving her the preference; and it is allowed, that all the beauties which they possessed are in her revived and improved.

Her talents are wholly of a humorous turn. She knows it, and is right in not attempting the serious in Comedy, nor the sublime in Tragedy, as her performance in that case would certainly be attended with a ludicrous disadvantage. She is excellent in the foolish simplicity of Mrs. Cadwallader, in the pertness of Phillis, and parts of that cast: she is happy in the Fine Lady in *Lethe*. Her figure and her years are indeed against her in *Miss Prue* and *Hoyden*; yet her performance is just and pleasing even in these, as in every thing she undertakes to perform.

She has a natural melody in her voice; and her manner of singing ballads is accompanied with a humour peculiar to herself. Mrs. Clive is not only the most useful, but the most entertaining actresses on the Stage: nay, if we consider her variety of powers, and her exertion of them, I fancy we may safely allow her to be the Garrick of the ladies.

Mrs.

Mrs. Davis's agreeable figure and graceful deportment command our attention to every part she assumes. She has merit in many characters, chiefly in Isabella in the Wonder, Lady Easy, Fair Quaker, &c. and in the Lady in Comus deserves the next place to Mrs. Cibber.

As we have not observed any order in speaking of different performers, but mentioned them just as they occurred, we hope the ladies will not fall out about their places, nor the gentlemen, who may perchance be placed at the lower end of the table, quarrel with us for indignity. After this admonition we will venture to say, that we have seen Miss Haughton with great pleasure in some parts of Mrs. Cibber's cast. She has strong feeling; but the weakness of her voice prevents her from making so good an impression as her judgment enforces. She has life and spirit in comedy; and we never see her without satisfaction.

Miss Minors (now Mrs. Walker) is possessed of an infinite fund of humour, which she very happily infuses into her parts. In the

U

Hoydens



Hoydens and pert chamber-maids she shews to great advantage; and there is no woman that can stand with a tithe of her merit, in the cast, and on the same stage, with Mrs. Clive. We must give her the preference, though Mrs. Green be in the same walk, to whom we, at the same time, grant great merit.

There are many characters which Mr. Davis fills to vast advantage. His King in Hamlet manifests great judgment; and his performance of Claudio, in Much Ado about Nothing, shews a great sensibility, a good understanding, and a genius that will daily improve.

Instinct sets Mr. Vernon right in Dramatic exhibitions; for he has certainly judgment in singing. In acting he shews a proper assurance, and he seems ignorant of it. I have seen him, young as he is, stand well in some parts of Mr. Woodward's cast.

Mr. Bransby had liked to have been overlooked in the crowd, which is a little odd, as he is no very trifling object: indeed, neither his person, nor his talents are diminutive. He  
fills

fills up a grave, serious cast on the Stage with great decency ; and the roughness of Down-right, in Every Man in his Humour, and of honest old Kent, in King Lear, sit on him with ease.

Mr. Burton is also in the serious cast of elderly men in Comedy ; and as he is a respectable citizen-like figure, and no stranger to his author's meaning, he never displeases. I saw him once play Sir Giles Over-reach with a great deal of satisfaction : nor is his Burleigh without merit.

I know not any Actor who has greater requisites for the Stage than Mr. Barry. He is tall, and well made ; neither too fat nor too lean : his whole person, taken together, is noble and commanding ; and it would, at all times, be extremely graceful, were he not inclined to stoop. His features are regular, handsome, and expressive ; his natural countenance open, placid, and benevolent ; but easily formed to the indications of haughtiness and contempt : not the young favorite of the mother of beauty could assume an air of greater tenderness, or softer sensibility, than he

does in Castalio, which had sunk for many years under the hands of ignorance and incapacity into obscurity. His voice is finely calculated to aid the appearance: it has melody, depth, and strength; but he does not always display it to advantage. There is a fine break of grief in it, which, if I do not mistake, he first introduced in the last Act of Essex; where, when the officers are pressing his departure, he points to his wife lying on the ground, with

*Oh! look there!*

The manner of this expression was so affecting, that the whole house burst into tears. He saw the effect, and has used the cause rather too often improperly. He again often runs out to a high treble that quarrels with the ear, and gives us room to suspect, that he is trying the force of his voice, instead of being warmed with the necessary passion. A performer of his rank and consequence ought to avoid giving any body room to arraign his judgment: for the future, perhaps, he will not leave such an opening to criticism.

After all, wherever love, grief, tenderness, or pity, are the ruling passions of a character, there Barry is sure to excel.

Othello

Othello is his master-piece; and his acting of it cannot be transcended. He addresses the assembled senate with an account of the whole process of his wooing better than any man I ever saw. In the two scenes in the third and fourth Act, where Iago works upon his credulity, so as to inflame him to the highest pitch of jealousy, his perturbations are natural and noble. His perplexity and anger in

*Villain! be sure you prove my love a whore.*

*Be sure of it---&c.*

are beautifully represented; and his attitude, when kneeling by the side of Iago, he vows vengeance against his unhappy wife, is truly graceful.

Here he shews us, that he has properly considered the passion of anger, which in man never breaks out in loud words, but is kept in under an interrupted voice; and discloses its utmost fury rather in action. On the other hand, the anger of a woman is loud, shrill, and frantic, having little or no strength, but what is in her tongue; and this Mrs. Hamilton appears well acquainted with, in her performance of Emilia in this Play.



Marc Anthony, in *All for Love*, is a character which he supports with elegance and propriety. It is impossible to see him stretched on the ground, in the first Act, overwhelmed with misfortunes, without entering into all his grief; nor does he forget to seize the great room a performer has to shine in the third Act of this Play. No body can attend without sympathetic feeling to Anthony's dispute with himself, whether to give way to love, or fatherly affection; and in his countenance the inward tumult and contention is finely marked.

In the *Humorous Lieutenant*, he performs Demetrius, a young prince possessed of many virtues, but actuated by very strong passions. There is a tincture of romance in it, but it is not bad; and in his hands it loses no part of its merit. In all the Scenes with Celia, whether representing tenderness, jealousy, or despondence, he is just and pleasing. Not so much can be said for his *Macbeth*. There is a character in the same Tragedy to which he is much better adapted. How delightful would the plaintive notes of his voice sound in Macduff's bewailing the loss of his children. There is a stern, murderous savageness in the first  
that

that becomes him not near so well as would the tenderness and affection of the last, in which Wilkes was always received with great applause; and is complimented by the Tatler, Numb. 68. Garrick exhibits this Play as it was written. Barry performs it with Betterton's alterations, which I cannot think any ornament to the piece. They put us in mind of German money, wherein we find copper and silver intermixed. Perhaps Shakespear has nowhere left us finer writing than in this Play; the speaking and acting of which is as hard as the writing is great. I cannot say I ever saw the character played all through equal to what I conceive of it. Mr. Barry has many beauties in it; on which neither my leisure nor space permit me to descant. I shall, however, delay a little here to remark to him, that I think him wrong in his manner of stopping this speech:

*To-morrow, to-morrow, &c.*

In this place, Macbeth, among other perplexities, receives the news of his wife's death, and cries out,

*She should have died hereafter---*

*There had been time for such a word to-morrow--*

*To-morrow, to-morrow, and to-morrow,  
Creep in a slow and stealing pace along, &c.*

Macbeth's situation is at this time so very critical, that he has not leisure to indulge private grief. Hence he is led to observe, that his wife's death had better happened at any other time than now, when his circumstances are so very perplexed; and which have now reached such a point, that they must, in the course of things, sustain some considerable change even by *to-morrow*; that this change he is persuaded will be for his advantage, through a reliance on the equivocal and delusive promises of the witches. His mentioning the word, *Morrow*, leads him into a chain of reflections upon its meaning and consequences, which are otherwise abruptly, nay, absurdly, introduced: and this is the case in Barry's way of replying to the account of his wife's death, which he delivers thus:

*She should have died hereafter---  
There had been time for such a word,  
To-morrow, &c.*

But he makes up for this mistake, if it may be called one, in that scene wherein he says,

*Is that a dagger which I see before me?*

in

in which he is extremely happy, as well as in receiving the ghost of Banquo, and all thro' the last Act.

He is certainly fine in the part of Alexander; the manner in which he disposes himself, his various attitudes in the last Act, and particularly in the last scene, have a charming effect; and one is wrought up almost to imagine, that Darius approaches in his chariot, drawn by milk-white steeds; and that Alexander is going to lead the charge against him. Yet this Play is spoiled in the altering, so miserably mangled, that were Nat Lee to rise from the church-yard of St. Clement's, where he lies buried (next to the tomb of William Pattison) he would run mad again; for poor Nat was as mad as his own Alexander. Misfortunes and drink were the occasion: he was under the regimen of a milk-diet for the last week of his life; but getting one evening out of his physician's reach, he drank so hard, that he dropped down in the street, and was run over by a coach. His body was laid in a bulk near Trunkit's, the perfumer's at Temple-bar, till it was owned. He was a clergyman's son; his education was liberal; he was for some  
time



time on the Stage, where he cut but a poor figure ; he had an open countenance, and a fine head of hair, which, when he missed in his lucid intervals, he often regretted it, having been necessary to shave him in his madness. He was modest and silent: his works speak his genius. Barry has done much justice to Varanes and Alexander : he is so happily formed to express that feeling of tenderness, that sensibility that runs through all Lee's Plays, and are the characteristicks of his genius, that the mentioning one puts me in mind of the other. I am not singular in saying, that since Wilkes's days there never was so fine a lover upon the Stage ; and this is a cast, in which were Barry to confine himself he would remain always unrivalled. I shall mention him in one character, in which he almost equals Verbruggen. Nobody, acquainted with the history of the British Stage, need be told, that I mean Bajazet. It was there that Verbruggen, whose eye had an infinity of fire, and who had great command of face, acquired vast reputation. There was something so astonishing in his silent expression of the rage, pride, and impatience of Bajazet, when in chains, so intimidating, that his only putting on the same  
look,

look, when one day he was in danger of being arrested under the piazzas, the bailiff was so frightened, that he dropped the writ, and ran away, as if a mob had been at his heels; at least Verbruggen told this story in Will's coffee-house, and said, that his Bajazet-look had killed a bailiff, and secured him his liberty. There are performers whom I have seen play this character; nay, and heard others praise, whose only merit consisted in growling, frowning, and rattling of chains. But Barry, through the whole, preserves a proper deportment; his dignity finely marks the character; and is happily intermixed with that fierceness, contempt, fullness, and savage temper, that should swell the bosom of this intractable monarch. There are few characters but what sit easy upon Barry; there is nothing labored in his deportment; and he often snatches from nature graces that cannot be too much admired.

Mr. Ryan has been long, and deservedly, a favourite of the town; but *being now sunk into the vale of years*, claims indulgence as much as he formerly did applause. From his long acquaintance on the Stage, he has acquired an  
ease

ease and freedom equal to any performer I can ever remember. In some parts of Iago, he has great merit; and in Mr. Ford is very excellent: but I wish he would resign Capt. Plume, Myrtle, Marcus, Archer, &c. and other characters of that kind, which require the fire of youth to execute.

Mr. Ross is a good figure, and has an elegance on the Stage which must recommend him in genteel Comedy, in which cast he has lately given strong proofs of his genius, especially in Sir Charles Easy, Constant, Frankly, and Dorimant. His Bevil is superior to any I have seen in that character; and I believe comes nearer the author's intention. He has succeeded in some characters in Tragedy, especially the Lovers; but his fort is genteel Comedy, in which he is equal to any Performer on the Stage.

Mr. Shuter's performance in the comic way is nearer to nature than most of the Comedians on our Stage. His chief excellence lies in old men. The setness and risible turn of his features diffuse a peculiar humour thro' all the parts he plays in low Comedy. He has

a fine vacancy of look, an inexpressible and inimitable simplicity in Master Stephen, which is finely contrasted by the blustering air of Bobadil. His Scrub has nothing forced in it: he makes every line of it tell, by his having strictly studied nature; and he is obliged to nothing of mimicry, but to real merit for the applause he gains in it. I would rather see him in the Puritan, in the Duke and no Duke, than in Trappolin. There is a part of the same nature in the Alchymist, in which I have seen him with great pleasure; the formality, the hypocrisy, and self-interestedness of the part, he preserves with all proper force, and is exceedingly just, and exceedingly laughable. His Launcelot, Cimberton, and Young Clincher, are equal to our warmest wishes. He is but young Falstaff; yet I think he plays it better than any man now on the Stage. However, in the first part of Henry the Fourth, I would rather see him play Francis; and his genius would make of Justice Shallow in the second part almost as much as old Cibber, whom nobody has yet come near in that character. Though he is far from being a bad Ben, in Love for Love, yet I own I prefer his Foresight. Nature has done a great deal for this



Actor; education very little; yet the goodness of his head is such, that he is daily advancing towards perfection, and doubt not of seeing him one day equally esteemed with the celebrated Pinkethman.

Mr. Sparks is an Actor of merit, and shews the strength of his judgment in chusing Acasto, Sciolto, and parts of that cast in Tragedy, which are well adapted to his years and manner. He stands well in Manly, in the Provoked Husband; and in the part of the Old Batchelor. He requires something of agitated passion in Tragedy, and of importance in Comedy to keep him up; but the former he sometimes overdoes; the latter he permits to degenerate into a strut, and an affectation of Quin's voice; otherwise he may be justly allowed pre-eminent in his walk.

Mr. Smith's figure is very pleasing; and his performance very tolerable: his voice is agreeable, but he wants variety, and speaks always in the same tone.

Mr. Dyer is a pleasing Actor, and claims applause in several characters in Comedy.  
He



He shines most in Dick in the Confederacy, Modely, Count Basset, &c. in some scenes of Clodio, and Tom in the Conscious Lovers; nor does he want merit in Macheath; but has not weight sufficient for Chamont, or Romeo, &c. These characters, besides a critical judgment, require expressive features, and a marking eye, which he wants. Would he keep to Comedy alone, he would shew his genius to greater advantage.

It would be unpardonable negligence not to mention Mr. Arthur's great excellence in the clowns in pantomimery; but I cannot help saying, that when he speaks, I forget all his merits.

Mrs. Bellamy has all the softness of her sex, and that sweet sensibility which gives the most affecting pathos to the tender parts in Tragedy. Monimia, Juliet, and Cordelia, as she represents them, have every thing that is engaging in beauty or innocence; and there her performance is the more pleasing as it seems to be dictated by nature alone. Parts of violence are too strong for her powers; and her voice and look must lose their effect in painting

ing the rage of Alicia, Hermione, or Zara. But in those of love, and tender distress, she is second only to Mrs. Cibber.

Mrs. Hamilton, formerly Mrs. Bland, appears in a very elevated light in Queen Elizabeth; the dignity and spirit of which she really supports very properly. Her Charlotte, in the Lady's Philosophy, is not without its admirers; but I must be free enough to tell her, that Lady Wrangle would now sit upon her with more ease. She has vivacity in Elvira in the Spanish Friar; and I should think it a high entertainment to see her perform in it along with Quin; who, in the Friar, was inimitable; and I dare say equalled Tony Leigh, whose picture in the character, by Kneller, was the Earl of Dorset's favorite, and to whose talents Dryden used to say, the piece owed much of its success.

C H A P.

## CHAP. IV.

*A short history of the Irish Theatre; and an account of the principal Performers.*

THOSE who are versed in the Irish language will tell you, that it is extremely musical, and admits of variety of poetical modulations. This we are certain of, that every noble family had its bard and its jester; from which they derived either serious or ludicrous entertainments, according to their disposition of mind. Yet, tho' there are many good poems extant in that language, we have not been able to find any that are dramatic: nor, with our utmost enquiry, do we learn what was their taste for theatrical entertainments; till the latter end of the reign of the illustrious Queen Elizabeth, and the beginning of James the First; at which æra Shakespear's writings were in as high a degree of estimation in Dublin as in London. There being no regular Theatre, it was customary for the nobility to have Plays occasionally exhibited at their own houses; some of them were also performed in the ball-room of the castle of Dublin by the nobility, &c.

The first Theatre that was built in Dublin was in St. Werburgh's-street, about the year 1634, by Mr. Ogilby, who was at that time deputy-master of the revels of both kingdoms. I have been informed it had a gallery and pit, but no boxes, except one on the Stage for the then Lord Deputy, the Earl of Strafford, who was Ogilby's patron. The names of the Actors who performed in this Theatre, I could never learn; but they had good success, particularly in 1638, with a new Play, called *The Royal Master*, wrote by Shirley, an intimate friend of the Manager's\*. This Play was acted several times at the castle by the nobility and gentry. It is dedicated to the Earl of Kildare; as was also a Play, called *Langartha*, written by Henry Burnell, Esq; and first acted on St. Patrick's day, in the year 1639; but the rebellion breaking out in 1645, the Theatre was shut up, and never afterwards opened. During the wars of that kingdom, Ogilby was reduced by various mis-

\* Shirley is said to have been possessed of some sketches of Beaumont's and Fletcher's. This in a great measure solves the manifest inequality of his pieces. I have been told, that this intelligence came from Dryden.

fortunes, and returned to England, where he remained till the year 1662; when his friends obtained him a renewal of a patent from his majesty for master of the revels in Ireland. On his return to that kingdom, he was very well received; and several of the nobility subscribed towards building a new Theatre in Smock-alley, of which he was master. It is said to have cost upwards of 2000 *l*. But his success not answering his expectations, he continued there but a short time, and returned to London, where he died in 1676. •

Joseph Ashbury, Esq; had been appointed deputy-master of the revels under Mr. Ogilby, and superintended that Theatre till 1671, when a part of it fell down, and killed and wounded several of the audience. It is uncertain whether any Plays were performed there again, till after the Revolution; and the first Play we then read of was Othello, presented by some gentlemen for their amusement; for now there was no regular company in Dublin. Mr. Ashbury, who was the only Actor by profession among them, performed Iago, and the celebrated Mr. Wilkes, Othello, which was his first attempt; and the applause



he received at that time induced him to quit a very valuable employment, of which he was in possession, and ever after to attach himself to the Stage. About half a year after, Mr. Ashbury formed a regular company, which was greatly encouraged; and those celebrated performers, Wilkes, Booth, Estcourt, Keen, Norris, Griffith, and T. Elrington, occasionally appeared among them. This manager had great skill in dramatic affairs, was an excellent performer, and many of the first rate players were formed by him. The principal actresses in this company were Mrs. Ashbury, a very amiable person, and of great merit in several characters, Mrs. Knightly, Mrs. Smith, and the celebrated Mrs. Butler, a great favorite of Charles the Second's, and one of the most eminent Comedians of her time. For her character, see C. Cibber's Life, page 121, vol. 1, 12mo.

This Theatre, under his prudent management, flourished from the time of the Revolution to his death in 1720, without interruption; except that in the year 1701, on St. Stephen's day, the galleries gave way, and several were hurt in endeavouring to get out. This  
was

was the first night that Shadwell's *Libertine* was performed in Dublin ; and many ridiculous stories were told of this accident. Among the rest, that the candles burned blue, and went out ; two or three times there was a dancer extraordinary among the devils on the Stage, that nobody knew him, and that he had a cloven foot, &c. &c. It was this gentleman to be sure that made free with the gallery ; and several grave folks pronounced, with solemnity, that it was a judgment on the spectators for going to see so profane a piece of work. However, it was not performed again for near twenty years afterwards, when Mr. Ashbury was dead.

Mr. Thomas Elrington, who was his son-in-law, succeeded him in the management of this Theatre, which he continued to his death in 1732. He was an Actor of great merit, both in Tragedy and Comedy, chiefly in *Orestes*, *Bajazet*, and *Oroonoko*. In the year 1732, a booth was opened in George's-lane, under the direction of Madam Violante, an Italian rope dancer, where several feats of activity of that kind were performed ; but not meeting with the success she expected, she

changed it into a play-house. Here it was that Mrs. Woffington made her first appearance in the character of Polly, in the Beggar's Opera. This lady has since stood in a capital light, both in Tragedy and Comedy, with a dignity in the former, and a polite deportment in the latter, that we despair of ever seeing equalled. Her Jocasta was noble and spirited; her Jane Shore tender and distressful; her Lady Townly easy and elegant; her Phillis humorous and affected: she had in her walk an ease, an air, and an understanding, for which we now search the Stage in vain. The Theatre being suppressed by the Lord Mayor, a very genteel one was built in Ransford-street, by permission of the Earl of Meath. Of this Mr. Husbands was manager. The Theatre Royal in Aungier-street was opened in the year 1734, with the Recruiting Officer; but this being built more for shew than real use, it was soon deserted; and on the 11th of December, 1735, the present one in Smock-alley was rebuilt by subscription, and opened with *Love makes a Man*.

The City-Theatre, in Capel-street, was opened afterwards, January 7, 1744-5, with  
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The Merchant of Venice; but the success here was not of long continuance; and it is now altogether neglected. A very elegant one is at present building for Mr. Barry in Crow-street, in that city, which will make the seventh that has been erected there since the year 1634; and is expected to surpass all the former in beauty and convenience.

These are the most material accounts worth recording of the Irish Stage, which has produced so many capital performers; the inhabitants of that kingdom having been always remarkable for their encouraging the polite arts, and more especially the Drama, of which they are good judges.

In 1711 Mr. Wilkes made a summer's excursion thither, and staid there three months; during which time he performed the character of Sir Harry Wildair for nineteen nights running at Smock-alley. In 1715 Jane Gray was performed seventeen nights successively; in the year 1727 the Beggar's Opera had a run of twenty-four nights. In 1735 Henry the Eighth was played twelve nights at Aungier-street; and the Royal Merchant about

seventeen in Ransford-street. The profits of a Play thirty years ago in Dublin were thought good, if they amounted to 50 *l.* Farquhar, who, in the year 1707, played Sir Harry Wildair for his own benefit, received 100 *l.* and though the part was of his own writing, his friends blushed to see him act it: however, he thought himself well paid, because his benefit far exceeded any thing that had ever been known in that city.

## C H A P. V.

*Of the Performers on the Irish Stage.*

**T**HE first of the Irish performers is Mr. Sheridan, a gentleman of a collegiate education, who was intended originally for the church; but fortune ordained that he should raise contributions on the world in another character, and brought him on the Stage. He soon found the Buskin preferable to the master's gown, and one night's benefit better than the annual income of a good vicarage. He set out with many disadvantages; some of which he conquered by perseverance and resolution. He found the Dublin Stage at the lowest ebb, without any spirit



spirit in the people to support it, or taste in the Managers to raise it. He took the burthen upon himself, to which he soon shewed he was well adapted. He solicited his friends to stand by him; they thought him worthy of it, and they did. He was particularly obliged to the gentlemen of the college in which he was bred, though he afterwards quarrelled with them. He cleared the Stage entirely of those *popinjays*, those gilded butterflies, who used to stop up the entrances, and shew themselves, their folly, and fine cloaths, plainer than the performers; a proceeding in which he was opposed by much want of manners, insolence of wealth, and wildness of youth. By such means he made his stage very regular; his decorations were in general proper, his cloaths elegant and in character, nor was his scenery and paintings bad. As a Manager it is allowed, even by his worst enemies, that he is excellent; that he has some humour, appears in his Farce of the brave Irishman; and his Essay upon Education is regarded as a proof of his learning and skill in school-discipline. When we come to consider him as an Actor, we find, with regret, we cannot say as much in his favor. Nature has not been very liberal

liberal to him in those practical gifts which are generally first regarded in that character. His voice is unequal, harsh, and discordant, and not sufficiently powerful to express the tender and pathetic of Tragedy, the delicate sensibility of Romeo, the fine tenderness of Anthony, or the workings of the relenting undone Varanes. Here, however just he may be in speaking, and in this his judgment never fails, yet his looks and action are unequal. However he may feel himself, he cannot convey it to his auditors: and old Cibber, in his Apology, justly remarks, “ That  
 “ though the sentiments of a declaimer may  
 “ be accompanied with all the sublimity that  
 “ poetry can raise them to; let them be delivered too with the utmost grace and dignity of elocution that can recommend them  
 “ to the auditor, yet this is but one light  
 “ wherein the excellence of an Actor can  
 “ shine;” and this may, in the course of his playing, be often applied to Sheridan. I remember to have seen him play Romeo, altered by himself, in which he took Mercutio’s fine speech of,

*Oh! then I see Queen Mab has been with you.*

very

very unseasonably out of his mouth, and recited it with all the melancholy solemnity of a sermon. I am sure he must have seen the impropriety of making Romeo speak a speech which was intended for the gay Mercutio to divert his own gloom : but perhaps he had no performer then in his company whom he could entrust with the speech ; and things considered in this, but in no other light, his performing the part of Romeo may be pardoned.

I doubt not but I shall see him in Friar Laurence, in which he would convey to us more pleasure than we ever experienced even in one speech ; nor is such a character beneath his notice. Betterton, Wilkes, Booth, and Cibber, have done some of as little consequence ; and Garrick at this day is in the same disposition. I have honored his judgment when I have seen him resign Anthony, and fall into Ventidius. The rough old soldier sat well on him ; and were he to give us Kent instead of Lear, we should praise him still more. Mr. Sheridan's genius tends to declamation, and speaking that has weight in it ; but here his figure is none of the best. By a view of it,

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one would think nature intended him for Comedy; but his attempt shews us we are deceived. His action is solemn, stiff, and confined, entirely void of that elegance and ease which is requisite in a Lord Townly, a Dorimant, or a Sir Charles Easy; nor can he assume the sprightly *degagée* air of an Archer, a Ranger, or a Benediſt; but he makes up for these deficiencies in his Tamerlane, his Cato, and his Brutus: the orations of the last were never better spoken. I remember to have seen him support the loss of Marcus in the former with all the resignation and patriot deportment that the circumstance enjoins. Hamlet is allowed to be his master-piece: it is a character into the spirit of which he enters; nor has he less merit in Horatio in the Fair Penitent; and he receives as much applause in replying to Lothario's appointing a place of duel,

*I'll meet thee there,*

as ever I heard. He deserved it for that look of contempt he put on; the negligence with which he heard him were fine contrasts to the warmth which he had manifested in the cause of virtue and his friend. There are some parts of Macbeth and Richard the Third in which he has merit. He went through *Œdipus*



pus happily. He possessed the transitions of the character, and particularly in the scene with Phorbas ; his words, his action, and his look strongly indicated the passions that raged and ruled by turns in the bosom of the unhappy prince.

I have heard his Falstaff much condemned, perhaps not with injustice : he wants that festivity, that joy, which nature must have given an Actor who fills up this character, otherwise it will lose its effects. Here old Quin was capital, and will perhaps remain for years unequalled. He was certainly Falstaff in perfection ; and in his playing it, he only shewed a copy of himself in his gayer hours. We shall conclude this character with observing, that in level-speaking Sheridan is always just ; that he is sometimes happy in conveying horror and terror ; and when he remains at home, he will, and must be always allowed excellence ; but if he wanders into the walks of tenderness and genteelity, he exhibits defects that counterbalance all his perfections.

Mr. Dexter has a genteel figure, agreeable voice, an easy carriage, and good sense. He  
has



has acquitted himself with applause in several parts of genteel Comedy ; and some of those he has attempted in Tragedy have been equally deserving of it.

Mr. King, a sprightly and useful Comedian, in some parts reminds us of Woodward. He has not as yet attained elegance sufficient for the Foppingtons, or Fine Gentlemen : however, there are several characters which hit his humour and genius ; among which are Sir Joseph Wittol, Tom in the Conscious Lovers, Brags, Scrub, the Lying Valet, Pedlar in Florizel and Perdita, &c. in all which his performance must ever appear pleasing.

Mr. J. Sparks is not only a useful but a very diverting Comedian : that pleasantry of temper which is habitual to him will not admit him to give a false colouring to any humorous character. In the hearty Old Men of Comedy he has great merit, particularly in Sir Sampson Legend. His Foigard is nearer to nature than any other performer's ; but his Teague in the Committee has not the vivacity of Barrington's. In Foigard he is very expressive of that ridiculous gravity which is  
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the result of pedantry and ignorance. He perfectly well supports all the oddity, wildness, and extravagance of Caliban. His Peachum and Serjeant Kite are humorous draughts of nature; and his merit lies in low Comedy.

Mrs. Fitz-Henry, on her first appearance, promised to arrive at excellence in a short time; but her improvements are slower than were then expected. There is a cast of parts suitable to her genius, and wherein she has merit; such as Hermione, Zara, &c. In Calista she supports the violence of her rage, where she tears the letter with great spirit; but afterwards fails in the distresses; and indeed in all characters of the tender or plaintive kind. Her action is too violent; and both that and her voice want that delicacy and tenderness which speaks to the heart. She does not promise to excel in Comedy, wanting an ease and genteelity which in polite characters is absolutely requisite. Would she modulate her voice, and regulate her action, it would add greatly to her excellence in Tragedy.

Before

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Before I dismiss this account of the Irish Theatre, I must not omit Mr. Sowdon, who, during the two years that he was Manager of it, conducted it with great regularity. Considered as an Actor he has merit in several characters; and I believe his performance of Henry the Eighth to be as true a likeness of that monarch as Shakespear or history could draw him. I have seen him also judiciously pleasing in Pyrrhus, Ventidius, Old Batchelor, and Strickland; and he must be always considered as a performer of consequence in the theatrical world.

### C H A P. VI.

#### *Of the Usefulness of the Stage.*

**A**MIDST all the fashionable amusements which have prevailed of late years in opposition to the Drama, the encouragement it still meets with is a convincing proof, that virtue, good sense, and taste, are yet to be found among us. As it has its foundation in reason, it will always find patrons of that character to improve and recommend it; and must at length prevail over those trifling amusements which have no connection

nection with either, and are calculated for such weak and vitiated appetites as cannot relish the exalted entertainments to which the Stage invites.

A just and refined taste in the public will have its due influence on the Stage. Was this more universal, the manager and actor would more strictly conform to it; and neither would introduce, or perform, what would not stand the test of truth and reason; and such as the audience is, such will always be the actor.

To have the springs of nature open to the soul, and to have the manners of mankind truly delineated, is the intent of the Drama. This cannot be effected, unless the audience will readily concur with the manager in promoting such theatrical pieces as will not only entertain the fancy, but mend the morals, and in discouraging those contemptible entertainments which, having nothing else but novelty and shew to recommend them, are too much the admiration of the gaping majority, till the lively lessons of moral instruction and example given by the Stage have influenced our understandings, and formed our manners



to a similitude of thinking and acting; or, in other words, till we think and act like rational creatures.

The Drama, considered in this light, will be found to be of national advantage, and claim all possible indulgence and encouragement from the public. When this is the case, we, like our forefathers, shall be charmed with the tender touches of nature in Shakspeare and Otway, the wit of Jonson, and the sprightly ease and genteelity of Fletcher; and, from the whole, derive both pleasure and improvement.

Though some are apt to complain of the expences of our theatrical entertainments, yet on comparison how insignificant are they, compared to those of our Italian Operas? Sorry I am to say, that I have known an Italian singer to have been paid more than double the sum in a season which our best performer has received. Is not this a preposterous preference of sense to sound, and unmeaning shew to nature and passion? To descend lower, have we not known the Stage to have been debased by wire-dancers, fire-eaters, ringing



ing of hand-bells, men playing on broomsticks, and tumblers climbing of ladders ?

*Old Shakespear's days could not thus far advance ;  
For what's his Buskin to our ladder-dance ?*

STEELE.

Such diversions were the reproach of common sense ; and were better adapted to the taste of the rude rabble at Bartholomew Fair, than a polite English audience.

Among the various frequenters of the Theatre, and even some who are its professed admirers, there are yet but few who can be selected as real judges, and have formed their taste on that true idea of perfection which is founded in nature. Most borrow their judgment and ideas from others, perhaps as ignorant and tasteless as themselves, whose censure or applause is only dictated by whim and caprice, and to be regarded accordingly. Some of these fashionable and pretendedly polite gentlemen have I seen, who had such savage hearts, or weak heads, that they have sat with the most inelegant indolence and unsentimental feeling at the most affecting passages of the best of poets, represented in all their  
Y 2 beauty

beauty by the best of Actors ; or, if they felt any tender natural emotion, they were ashamed to disclose what would have been their highest glory, that they were \* men, and not strangers to the distresses of humanity.

It was politely said of one of the greatest Generals† of his age, who was observed to be tenderly affected at the distress of Indiana, That he would fight ne'er the worse for all that ; and indeed he who could be so moved with an imaginary scene of private distress, discovered as true a greatness of soul as the warmest patriot does in the defence of his country.

I recollect an instance not unlike this, which happened once in a celebrated theatre. When Orestes had wrought himself up to the highest pitch of rage and phrenzy, one of the spectators caught the magical infection, and for a long time after did not recover his usual way of thinking. If this man had not the strongest understanding, he had at least the

\* Homo sum, et nil humani a me alienum puto.

TER.

† Duke of Marlborough.

most

most feeling heart. Such are the effects of a well wrote, or well acted scene, on minds actuated by nature alone.

This tender sensibility in the fair sex adds a double lustre to their charms; and to see them shedding tears only at imaginary woe, heightens every beauty into a perfection of the most amiable kind, which at once attracts our veneration and love.

There is another species of unfeeling admirers of the Drama, who barter all solid sense and reason of our own growth for a silly, stupid admiration of foreign productions; who fancy that they see more regular and correct beauties in the cold and studied productions of foreigners, than in all the unfettered flights of our unrivalled British muse. The real fire which animates our dramatic genius is too warm and too bright for their nearer view or examination; and whilst our Stage boasts of authors which Greece or Rome might envy, the limited starved regularity of Corneille, Racine, and Moliere, is preferred by these witslings to that real language of nature which

our poets dictate, and to which our Actors give voice, motion, and action.

The feebleness of that language which we so much admire sinks under the weight of a bold and free sentiment. The tyranny and superstition of their government have infested their language with all that froth and slavish complaisance which we so heartily reject and despise as much in their Drama as in common conversation.

A truly poetical spirit is a spirit of liberty, which is the blessing of our nation and constitution. Should a poet of theirs by great chance hit upon a sentiment of the kind, it must be suppressed in silence, for fear of the resentment of the Grand Monarque, and punishment of his Bastile. I have often thought, and am not alone in my opinion, that if our admired poet was translated into their effeminate dialect, he would suffer considerably under their perpetual returns of languid rhyme, which would let all the spirit of his heaven-born genius evaporate, and only leave a *caput mortuum* of dead imitation behind. This will appear plainly to those who will take pains to com-

compare the French translations of the Fair Penitent and Venice Preserved with the originals, in which the greatest beauties of both are omitted. By the way, let it be observed, that one of Shakespear's most envious defamers owes the chief part of his dramatic reputation to his numerous, but unacknowledged, plagiaries from this our great Ornament and Master of the Drama.

And I would remark in the last place, that as nature is always the same, though at different times she may wear different aspects; and as the first Dramatic Genius drew her as he found her, I see no reason why our Shakespear may not have as good a right to vary from, or reject, the antient model, by drawing from something more grand and august than had been before discovered. And I might add further, that as the Stagyrte drew his rules from a model or example ready drawn to his hands, I do not see for what reason they should be imposed as a perpetual rule or obligation for any future poet to observe, who had genius to strike out new beauties and graces of his own superior to, and undiscovered by all former rules of art; which might serve



as a standard and example for future poets and critics to follow.

Severe is the fate of the author and actor who is obliged to submit to such superficial inspectors. When an author has lavished away the whole strength and richness of his genius in producing a work worthy of the public attention, and has embarked all his hopes of future fame and advantage on the attempt; when the actor too has endeavored to give the utmost grace to every idea, very often they are dismissed without a hearing; or, if heard, with disregard and contempt: the fair edifice is blasted by envy, malevolence, or ignorance, and the author and his performance consigned to perpetual obscurity. To judge of the language, sentiment, &c. of a new Play on seeing it once only, requires a degree of discernment, which very few are master of, though all pretend to be judges. Mr. Congreve\* justly observes,

\* It may be a matter of curiosity to inform the public, tho' it is not immediately pertinent to our subject, what this gentleman (who was so good a judge of true humour) esteemed as the most diverting Comedy in the English tongue; and that was the Northern Lass, wrote by  
Broome.

observes, that "Many come to a play so over-charged with criticism, that they very often let fly their censure, when through their rashness they have mistaken their aim." One would think that the bare attempt to please, though unsuccessful, has yet merit enough in it to demand a candid reception and fair hearing.

The case is the same with respect to the young actor, though it is allowed that his art

Broome. I have it from unquestionable authority, that he has often declared to his friends, he would rather be the author of that piece than of all he ever wrote; and had never missed seeing it for twenty years. Mr. Addison was of the same opinion. What the motive of their approbation was, I shall not determine; but perhaps the good performance of it was one. In the year 1711, the cast of the parts were thus:

Northern Lads, Mrs. Bicknell; Sir Philip Luckless, Mr. Wilkes; Tridewell, Mr. Mills; Sir Paul Squelch, Mr. Johnson; Bullfinch, Mr. Estcourt; Widgin, Mr. Bullock; Captain Anvil, Mr. Spillar; Nonsense, Mr. Norris; Howdee, Mr. Cibber; Beavis, Mr. Bickerstaff; Pate, Mr. Bullock, jun. Widow, Mrs. Knight. The Spectator, 468, gives a high encomium of Estcourt's performance of Bullfinch. This was formerly a stock-play; but has been neglected for some years.

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is one of the most difficult of any ; that few are capable of softening the soul with the tender touches of woe, of charming the heart with the harmony of nature, and calling those passions into action which before slept in the soul ; and as, to accomplish all this requires such uncommon powers, such an actor is intitled to all the patronage and encouragement the public is capable of bestowing.

And it is to be lamented, that such a station, which requires to be filled up with such extraordinary talents, should be held in such disrepute by some, or be subject to the supercilious remarks of those nominal critics, who without the least knowledge of the Drama, and sometimes so destitute even of common literature, without an acquaintance with life, and its manners, and altogether strangers to the delicate sensations of the human heart, yet assume a right to judge of the merits or demerits of a performer, whose merits are perhaps as much beyond their comprehension as their blemishes are remote from their discernment.

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To be a judicious critic of an actor's performance requires almost as much judgment as to be an actor. Their difference is only this; that the one has formed his judgment and idea of perfection on a comparison of those different characters and objects which have come within his observation: the other is obliged, by severe study and application, to inform himself of every thing which will give the appearance of truth and reality to his performance, and to reduce all his theory into practice.

Every dawning of merit in a young actor should be kindly nourished by the audience with its due proportion of applause, till it has attained perfection. Young blossoms bloom into maturity under a warm sun; cold winds destroy them; and envy, prejudice, and ignorance have damped the fire of many a promising genius.

I have often observed in the first appearance of a divine, or orator, fear has got the better of his abilities. The case is the same with the player. An absolute perfection should not therefore be expected at first: the best  
per-

performers are still conscious that they fall short of it, and cannot act up to their own ideas. There should be kind allowances made by all audiences for the involuntary failings of young, nay indeed of old actors. A variety of causes, most of them unknown, and what the audience have no concern with, may occasion an actor to perform unlike himself on some occasions; and when he has done his utmost, when his duty calls to divest himself of all connection with common life, and forget even his own being to assume a contrary character, it would be cruel to condemn him all at once, and to deprive him of all future reputation and advantage for a few unintended slips.

I know but of one case where an actor is inexcusable; and that is where he is deficient in point of memory. Because this, as has been formerly remarked, is the highest indignity that can be offered to his auditors; but as this negligence is commonly treated with the contempt it deserves, it does not need any further remark.

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On the other hand, many a promising actor has been spoiled by the ill-timed, injudicious applause of an ignorant audience ; as a certain writer has observed, “ it is more difficult to praise than to blame ; because it is easier to discover in people what may be turned into ridicule than to understand their merit.” This has increased their self-sufficiency and arrogance, and made them greater in their own eyes than in the public’s ever after. Several examples of this kind might be given, were it necessary.

It is not a little mortifying to some of our best actors to have their merits disputed, and their predecessors preferred before them, as if human nature was not the same in all ages, and could not be as well represented now as by an actor who flourished fifty years ago. This partial way of judging arises chiefly from the ideas formed in youth, which as they are the first, make the most lasting impression ; and those persons and objects which at first delighted us are always dearest to our recollection. By these ideas their standard of taste and perfection is fixed ; and ever after whatever varies from it, however excellent in its kind,

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kind, is either condemned, or but coolly approved of. Thus the fame of an actor, like that of a poet or painter, increases with time, his beauties still bloom in recollection, and his faults, like those of Homer or Shakespear, are too remote for candor to enumerate. When Booth flourished, Mr. Betterton was remembered with regret, as Hart had been before; and notwithstanding all their respective excellencies, there are some of opinion, that were it possible to see them in competition with our modern Roscius, the scale of merit would greatly turn in his favour, nature being now more than ever the standard of taste and perfection in the Drama.

Of all stations that of a Manager seems to be the most difficult, to fill with satisfaction to the public, to the persons under his direction, and to himself. Often it happens, that when he has done his utmost to serve the public in preparing an entertainment to their taste, and adapting it to the different geniusses of his performers, his most sanguine hopes are frustrated by the inconsiderate behaviour of some, who, void of all manners and decorum, and out of a particular pique to  
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some poor author, or actor, or for some other trifle of that nature, disturb the public entertainment, and turn the Theatre, which is, or ought to be the School of Manners, into a Bear-garden. Such nuisances of society have often met with the treatment they deserved; and it is a pity they ever escaped it.

The Manager, considered in his proper light, is the trustee or conductor of the most rational amusements of the public. If all who are fond of the Drama, and who are desirous of seeing order and decency preserved in it, will protect him in his station, and concur with him in promoting such entertainments as are worthy of it; then may we expect to see the Stage a real School of Virtue, extending its instruction and usefulness every where. The reformation will become general; virtue and good sense will become fashionable; and, if the player exemplifies the Scene in his moral conduct, he will be always esteemed as an honourable and useful member of society.

F I N I S.

OF THE

The logo of the British Museum, featuring the text "MVSEVM BRITAN NICVM" in a stylized, blocky font, enclosed within an octagonal border.

